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## Cover Picture

'Virgil in his Study' (L'Inferno: Canto II), a screenprint by Tom Phillips as shown at Waddington Galleries (21 and 34 Grafton Street, London W1) together with Phillips's translation of Dante's *Inferno* related paintings, drawings, screenprints, notebooks for the translation and bookbindings, until November 26.

From this week an index of books reviewed, alphabetically arranged by author, appears on the inside back page.

## Kipling and the eye of love

Craig Raine

ELLIOT L. GILBERT (Editor)  
'O Beloved Kids': Rudyard Kipling's Letters to his Children  
Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95.  
0 291 78296 7

'O Beloved Kids' gathers the extant letters of Kipling to his son John and his daughter Elsie during the years 1906 to 1915, when John was killed in action at Loos. Kipling had wangled him into the Irish Guards, although the boy had already been rejected by both army and navy because of his eyesight. From Bath, Kipling permits himself a 'gloat', writing of a twenty-year-old acquaintance, anxious to drive cars at the front, but with a certificate of medical unfitness: 'I expect his Mamma was at the back of that certificate.' Carrie, Kipling's wife, was more sturdy and when his old French governess asked why John was in the army, there was no question, Carrie proudly replied, 'Precisely because there is no compulsion.' The sentiment is no longer fashionable, yet it is comprehensible and still has the power to move us, as Lowell realized in 'For the Union Dead'. The cause was better, but the principle the same:

Without bounds now. He rejoices in man's lovely, possible power to choose life and die - when he leads his black soldiers to death, he cannot bend his back.

Where Colonel Shaw's father, though, wanted no monument / except the ditch, / there his son's body was thrown / and lost with his 'niggers'. Kipling gave himself the penitential task of working for the War Graves Commission. John Kipling's body, however, was not found and there is a moment of sickening poignancy in his penultimate letter, which includes a request: 'By the way, the next time you are in town would you get me an Identification Disc as I have gone and lost mine. I think you could get one at the Stores. Just an aluminium Disc with a string through it like this ...'. A drawing follows.

Before we judge John Kipling's mother, we should remember that when Kipling was critically ill in New York with inflammation of the lungs, Carrie's steady quality saved his life. As he lay in a fever, his first-born, Josephine, died. One can do no better than quote the simple account in Charles Carrington's unsurpassed biography: 'The doctors forbade that John in his weakness should be told of this calamity ... When Carrie went from the hospital straight to his bedside, remembering in that she was dressed in black, she snatched up a scarlet shawl as she entered the room and threw it round her shoulders so that he would ask no question.' Josephine was seven years old when she died. Few people would have had the strength to keep the secret of such a grief. Kipling believed in sacrifice, but not easily. No one has written more tenderly of children or of what parents feel for them. 'They' is Kipling's classic tribute to Josephine, a story by which he includes himself in the hideous democracy of grief that all parents feel. 'The Gardener' is the tribute exacted by the death of his son and again Kipling's imagination is flexible and delicate enough to include even the ghastly Mrs Scarsworth. In the matter of bereavement, Kipling was a communist who recognized no hierarchies of suffering.

As for John's enlistment, Kipling already knew what loss of a child could mean and, as a war correspondent, he could judge the risks. It was not the glub decision of an uncaring child. And though these letters contain many expressions of pride, we can assess from 'Dymchurch Flit', what went into Kipling's decision. It is one of his greatest stories, largely told in Sussex dialect, which bears comparison with Frost's 'The Withered Tree' and probably surpasses it. Both Frost and Kipling renew the old tradition where the kind of supernatural power that they treat would naturally have been expressed. The alterations are simple but profound. Both abandon rhyme and literary dialect. Frost chooses real American and a flexible blank verse, Kipling goes to prose and a dialectal Sussex speech. 'The Withered Tree' wanted to renew the balance between the supernatural and the natural event and the stable, Kipling and Frost re-

tain the macabre event, but naturalize the form.

In 'Dymchurch Flit', Widow Whitgift is a psychic and, therefore, a possible channel of communication for the fairies or Pharisies who have been driven into Romney Marsh as Henry VIII's Reformation gets under way, tearing down 'the Images'. The Pharisies wish to escape to France where the atmosphere is more congenial, where they will be less 'steeched up an' frightened'. After a typically oblique and powerfully elusive exposition of the groundwork, much like Frost's sidling and sidelong approach to his narrative subjects, the tale suddenly accelerates and simplifies:

particularly good at games. Yet Kipling's stories return ceaselessly in the nature of parental love, its ability to expend inexhaustible passion on apparently worthless objects. There is Wyn Fowler in 'Mary Postgate', 'an unlovely orphan of eleven', who repays Mary's devotion

by calling her 'Gatepost', 'Postey', or 'Pack-thread', by thumping her between her narrow shoulders, or by chasing her beating, round the garden, her large mouth open, her large nose high in air, at a stiff-necked shamble very like a camel's.

There is the Copley family in 'Friendly Brook' who have a 'Bernorder cripple-babe', but not for the money they receive for fostering: 'It's



IT IS A REMINDER TO YOU TO WASH YOUR TEETH!

I CAN'T THINK OF ANY OTHER NEWS JUST NOW  
MRS DOUGLASS AND DOROTHY DOUGLASS ARE  
COMING DOWN FOR THE DAY TO DAY. I HAVE HAD  
A LETTER FROM MY MOTHER AND AM WRITING TO ASK  
HIM TO WRITE TO YOU AND SEND YOU DRAWINGS IN  
THE LETTERS.  
THAT THE OLD ZUGER PATRIAL WAS A SUCCESS  
- AND WAS WILL GIVE YOU MANY GOALS.  
NOW - MY SON - I'VE GOT TO WORK - ALL SAME I'D  
BEFORE NIGER - AT MY BEAUTIFUL LETTERS SO I DID  
YOU FAREWELL AND I REST AND REMAIN  
YOUR LOVING DADDY.

IT IS AWFUL HARD WORK TO PRINT  
A LETTER ALL THROUGH. DO HURRY  
UP AND LEARN TO READ MY ORDINARY  
beautiful clear handwriting.

The end of Kipling's letter of November 6, 1907 to his son John - reproduced from the book reviewed here.

bandy', says Jabez. But the child's mother, 'Dada' he says, an 'Mamma' he says, with his great rollin' head-piece all burred in in that iron collar. He won't live long - his back-bane's rotten, like. But they Copleys do just about set store by him - five bab ar no five bab.

For Kipling, this isn't an extreme case. It is a human constant he can effortlessly empathize with. It is this knowledge of parental love, too, which produces some of Kipling's most savage stories. He knows it can be murderous if threatened - as it is, most obviously, in 'Mary Postgate', where the wizened old spinster stands over a German airman with a revolver, luxuriating first in his death (from injuries sustained in a fall from his aircraft) and then in a hot bath. This act of barbarism, Mary knows, would not gain Wyn's approval were he alive. Nor does it, I think, elicit Kipling's approval - only his understanding. The same theme is examined in 'A Sahib's War', where Kipling's attitude is less ambiguous. The narrator, Um Singh, is a Sikh who is a kiod of adopted father to a Sahib called Kurban: 'Young - of a reddish face - with blue eyes, and he liked a little on his feet when he was pleased, and cracked his finger-joints. How carefully Kipling implies, in the first three phrases, this young man's virtual anonymity, and how carefully he conveys the immense emotional investment of the narrator in the last two descriptive touches, singling out characteristics invisible except to the eye of love. In this story, the narrator attempts to revenge himself on a treacherous Boer family who have killed his 'son', Kurban Sahib. They are not prepossessing: 'an old man with a white beard and a wart upon the left side of his neck; and a fat woman with the eyes of a swine and the jowl of a swine; and a toll young man deprived of understanding. His head was hairless, no larger than an orange, and the pits of his nostrils were eaten away by a disease. He laughed and slavered ...'. When the Sikh narrator pleases his revenge, he intends to be exact, a child for a child: 'and the idiot lay on the floor with his head against her knee, and she counted his fingers and laughed, and she laughed again. So I knew they were mother and son ...'. He means to hang the son in front of her mother and Kipling accurately

records her anguish: 'the woman hindered me not a little with her screechings and plungings'. Um Singh, who has taken opium to sustain him, is deflected from his purpose by a vision of the dead Kurban Sahib who orders him to refrain, telling him that this is a Sahib's war. Mary Postgate has no such assistance back to civilized values and the rule of law - only her tortured instinct, in its full atavism. Nevertheless, though the Boer family survive, Kipling makes us know the force of parental grief. If it is the eye of love that isolates and cherishes that habit of cracking the fingers, it is the same eye, hideously inflamed, that registers the wart on the left side of the Boer's neck.

In his stories, Kipling often measures love by its opposite, and these letters also show how deep this habit of thought and expression went. Though they are entitled 'O Beloved Kids', Kipling's expressions of affection are rarely straightforward. Except for two occasions ('You see, I love you'), Kipling prefers the ironical mode: 'Mummy is better I think every day than she was (perhaps because two yelling pestiferous brats are away)'; 'she says as long as she hasn't you two horrid little brats to look after she can stand most things'; 'I regret I have not kicked you enough'; 'I think he wants being kicked with love and forethought'; 'if it had been you I should have chastised you with a cricket stump'. Examples of this knock-about stuff would be easy to multiply. Clearly, they conceal an almost embarrassing concern and tenderness, a passion more single-minded and obsessive than the sexual. Despite the tough front, Kipling is completely infatuated and showers gifts on his son while the letters keep up a saving pretence of sternness. Squash courts are built, there are treats at Brown's Hotel followed by music halls, motor bikes are bought, gramophones, and finally a Singer car. There can be no question: Kipling was a sugar daddy.

All the same, it has to be said that these letters are comparatively dull reading. Elliot L. Gilbert, an able Kipling scholar, has contributed an introduction which does its level best to inject interest, but it is largely spurious in its claims. The letters do not amount to an unofficial biography of Kipling's son: we learn a little more but, truly, there isn't a lot to learn. Nor will it do to pretend that this correspondence is of a piece with the stories written for children: in one sense, the world has long enjoyed 'letters' from Kipling to his children. The *Just So Stories*, we know, were addressed directly to them.

This is a false connection, though one can see the commercial advantage of pretending these letters are like a new volume of stories. They are not. They lack, except very sporadically, Kipling's descriptive gifts: there is nothing here to set against the crocodile's 'musky, luskymouth', or 'the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River', or the 'Yellow Man', 'yellow - not from sickness, but by nature - yellow as honey, and his eyes stood endwise in his head'. There is a mildly absorbed description of whaling, but little to match the bravura account of how the Pharisies entered the fishing smack to sail to France:

Then I saw - then, they say, she had to brace back same as if she was wadin' in tide-water for the Pharisies just about, flowed past her - down the beach to the boat; a dunnamany of 'em - with their wives an' children an' valiseables, all escapin' out of cruel Old England. Silver you could hear tinkin', an' liddle bundles hove down dunn on the bottom boards, an' passels of liddle swords an' shields bakin', an' liddle fingers an' toes scratchin' on the outside to board her when the two sons pushed her off. That boat she sunk lower an' lower, but ell the Widow could see in it was her boys movin' hampered-like to get at the tackle.

'O Beloved Kids' demonstrates that, though Kipling was a master at writing for children, he was noticeably less good at writing to children. It seems a paradox, perhaps to be explained by Kipling's theory of inspiration: 'This is the doom of the Makers - their Daemon lives in their peo. If he be absent or sleeping, they are even as other men.' As an explanation of the difference between Kipling the artist and Kipling the correspondent, it has at least the virtue of familiarity. Henry James's story 'The Private Life' advances much the same thesis, with the bluff social animal at the dining table while his industrious and inspired *doppelgänger* is covering realms upstairs. It is usually thought to be based on Browning, but a conversation between Blanche



Adney and James's narrator, after Blanche has seen the *doppelgänger*, may point also to Kipling. "We understood each other", she says. "By flashes of lightning" the narrator inquires. There is a real thunderstorm, of course, but it is just possible that James, always baffled by Kipling's crude enthusiasm for the motor car, is alluding delicately to Oscar Wilde's famous pronouncement: "as one turns over the pages of his Plain Tales one feels as if one were seated under a palm tree reading life by superb flashes of vulgarity".

A nearer explanation of Kipling's failure as a letter writer to his children involves a proper understanding of his children's stories. Professor Gilbert's theory is a trifle sentimental, in my view: for him, Kipling is a great children's writer because he preserved inside him the undamaged soul of a child. He supports this view with a quotation from a letter to Amelia Clifford in 1890: "Why can't you be a baby now and again as I am always." Two additional pieces of "evidence" are pressed into service. Gilbert feigns to be unable at first to distinguish the mustached Kipling from the children he is sitting cross-legged among in a photograph. And he claims that a comic sketch of John in a huge overcoat amounts to another sighting of his theory - the enduring child in grown-up togs. It is clever, novel and daft. After all, this overcoat could be reversible and one could argue from it that Kipling's work for children is essentially adult, despite its childish starting point - that the overcoat has the greater bulk. At least this would not contradict

Kipling's own view of his children's stories, as he expresses it in *Something of Myself*: yet, since the tales had to be read by children, before people realised that they were meant for grown-ups; and since they had to be a sort of balance to, as well as a sent upon, some aspects of my "Imperialistic" output in the past, I worked the material in three or four overnights and textures, which might or might not reveal themselves according to the shifting light of sex, youth and experience. . . . So I loaded the book up with allegories and allusions, and verified references until my old chief would have been almost pleased with me.

There seems no good reason to dispute this account. Kipling, though he believed in his Daemon, as any writer must if he is not to force his talent, also makes it clear in "The Wrong Thing" that his art had no place for guesswork. It was conscious and critical after the Inner Voice had played its part: "iron's sweet stuff," says Hal, "if you don't torture her, and hammered work is all pure, truthful line, with a reason and a support for every curve and bar of it".

It is difficult to imagine any child grasping this piece of aesthetic theorizing from *Rewards and Fairies*. It is a warning to adults that nothing can be skipped, that every detail is relevant. Obviously, though the stories in *Puck of the Hills* and *Rewards and Fairies* are finally aimed at a sophisticated readership, the ostensible readership demands some compromise, but surprisingly little. In fact, Dan and Una are frequently deployed by Kipling to pre-empt and disarm uneasiness. They act as surrogates within the story: "I think this tale is

getting like the woods," says Dan, "darker and twistier every minute"; "I don't understand a bit," says Una; "I don't understand all of it, but I like hearing about the little Picts," says Una, extending her bafflement in a companionable way to the youthful reader. Sometimes these declarations provoke explanation; sometimes they do not. Occasionally, too, Kipling inverts the procedure by conceding wider knowledge to Dan and Una (and, of course, the reader) than the actual narrators possess. They are, for instance, more than a match for Sir Richard Dalyngridge in "The Knights of the Joyous Venture": they understand the compass ("the evil Spirit strove day and night to return to his country, and therefore, look you, the iron needle pointed continually to the South") and they realize that Sir Richard's Devils are actually apes. By judicious flattery, by a certain amount of conceded exposition, by displays of ignorant solidarity, Kipling contrives to draw children through to the end of his demanding tales.

Even so, there are clearly moments when a young reader will be utterly lost - Tom Shoemith's elliptical résumé of the Reformation, for instance, or the unexplained reference to Tom Doughty in "Simple Simon" which is, in fact, crucial to the unravelling of the Aunt's psychic prediction for Francis Drake. Sometimes, too, it is clear that Kipling has included a joke for adults at the expense of his younger readers: in "A Doctor of Medicine", Puck teases Culpeper about his astrological gifts and asks him to identify a star which is in actually the midwife's cycle lamp, as Culpeper realizes. "Wrong, Nick," says Puck, "Tis a singular bright star, in Virgo, declining towards the house of Aquarius the water-carrier, who hath lately been afflicted by Gemini." Una "contradicts" Puck: "No, it's the village nurse going down to the Mill about some fresh twins that came there last week. . . ."

In "Marklake Witches", Kipling's miniature *Wings of the Dove*, the failure of Una to comprehend fully is essential to the pathos of the story. Philadelphia, the peppy heroine, is dying of TB but does not know it. She is merely irritated by a troublesome cough and tells her story with such panache and vim that few young readers will grasp the significance of the experiments with primitive stethoscopes ("tis wonderful like haard'n' a man's soul whisperin' in his innards"). At the story's end, Philadelphia doffs her tomboy persona to play the host at her father's table where the Duke of Well-

## Dis-spirited

Dominic Hibberd

ANTHONY BERRIDGE (Editor)  
The Letters of Edward Thomas to Jesse Berridge  
97pp. Enitharmon Press. £8.50.  
0 905289 382

Although some of the more interesting passages are familiar, this run of seventy-seven brief letters has never been published in its entirety before, nor has Jesse Berridge's warm-hearted memoir of Thomas. The correspondence covers the span of a secure friendship (1901-17) which "easily" withstood "Thomas's melancholy fits and his typically blunt criticisms of Berridge's poetry. In virtually every letter, Thomas suggests a meeting, hankering as always after companionship. ("The cuckoo came last Monday, the nightingale on Friday; when are you coming?") He reports on his writing, sitting "like a fowl on an added egg" over books and reviews that were tediously reluctant to hatch. He frequently mentions literature but rarely discusses it, so that his requests for the loan of books are perhaps the most revealing evidence of his work and thought. Only in the longest letter does he set out some critical opinions, responding to Berridge's Rossetti-ish sonnets with a characteristic insistence on the "sensa & concreteness" of words.

As a Christian and eventually a person, Berridge longed that Thomas should "experience some awareness of God", knowing that Thomas had "something of the mystic in his poet's vision". In his memoir, he recalls Thomas as



Elsie, John and Josephine Kipling in 1898.

ton is guest. Kipling's description of her daughter is detailed and drenched with the sense of a womanhood that will be wasted: But Cissie had laid out my very best evening dress, the white satin one, vendyked at the bottom with spots of moire foil, and the pearl knots, you know, catching up the dreyery from the left shoulder. But poor mother's lace tucker and her cornet comb. Kipling's finest touch is to make Una carry this poor doomed adolescent: "Oh, you lucky! Una murmured. "And, at the last, after Philadelphia has recounted how she played the harp ("not very difficult fingering, but ravishing sentiment"), Kipling permits himself to sound the note again: "I wish I'd been you said Una, clasping her hands." The song Philadelphia sings encompasses Kipling's recurrent dread of children's mortality: I have given my heart to a flower, Though I know it is fading away, Though I know it will live but an hour And leave me to mourn its decay!

As he said, these stories were "meant for grown-ups". Only a grown-up could place that song correctly and critically, yet feel its full force in the context.

Kipling knew his audience. Even the simplest *Just So Stories* are spiked with jokes for adults who had to read them aloud. Like McSweeney in *Hard Times*, Kipling knew that "people must be amused, Thquire, thomson". People, in this case, were the paying customers - the adult. In his children's stories, Kipling made the adult laugh, but more often made him cry.

"fine and troubled spirit" and his "extraordinary talent for giving on intense significance to single, almost momentary, experience". The word "spirit" is perhaps the key to this little book. Thomas disapproved of the word even on metrical grounds ("I do not like to see it") and firmly resisted a hint that he could be described as *anima naturaliter Christiana*. "Don't label me o.a.c. while I'm alive. It seems as particularly a privilege of the unworldly dead to have someone come down upon them & pin that order onto their breast. It won't matter then." He described Berridge to Gordon Bottomley in 1902 as "the most pervasive Complete 'idealist' I ever met" but he seems to have been attracted by that perversity. "It is what I was. Despite his distaste for the pedantic Platonism of Berridge's verse, he appears to have regarded him as a regular source of information on religious matters. His friend him for books on mysticism. His friend's apparently untroubled faith may have been a comfort as well as a puzzle, so such company. Thomas's own nature was at ease, and indeed he seems to have put more effort than Berridge into maintaining the friendship.

Compared with Thomas's letters to Bottomley, this collection is slight, yet it contains enough to interest anyone who already admires Thomas's work. Anthony Berridge (probably a relation, to his regret) provides useful notes and an informative introduction from which his namesake emerges as a charming character in his own right. There is little mention of Thomas's poems, but one senses from the letters their author's increasing steadiness when coming to "the borders of sleep," he said himself as a poet.

## Smoke signals

P. N. Johnson-Laird

JEREMY CAMPBELL  
Grammatical Man: Information, Entropy, Language, and Life  
310pp. Allen Lane. £12.95.  
0 7100 1566 8

Back in the early 1960s before the Bionics were invented, there were only two cultures and according to the late C. P. Snow the test that distinguished their members was the second law of thermodynamics. If you knew that entropy increases, you were a scientist with "the future in your bones"; if not, you were at best an artist. Of course you could readily acquire this shibboleth, but the ability to spout it no more gave you a real scientific understanding of the phenomenon than, say, the act of referring to "cupkins" rather than "serviettes" turned you into a genuine member of the upper classes. Those who aspired to social mobility were catered for by guides to the linguistic theories of English usage, U and non-U. Those who aspired to intellectual mobility have had to wait until the appearance of Jeremy Campbell's book.

*Grammatical Man* is a history of the concept of entropy and of its ramifications in biology, linguistics, and psychology. For physicists, entropy is statistical disorder. In a sense, it is what gets up the chimney when heat is used to do mechanical work: according to the first law of thermodynamics energy is never lost, but much of it takes too disorderly a form to be converted into work, and this increase in disorder is captured in the second law. Entropy may seem remote from language, life, and the mind, but there is a connection that depends on the statistical theory of information.

Suppose one asks which communicates more information, a page from today's *Guardian* or an extract of the same length from *Finnegans Wake*. One answer is: the newspaper is more informative because it conveys facts (well, usually) whereas Joyce's novel is an often incomprehensible account of a dream. Communication engineers, however, are not interested in such semantic matters as truth and comprehensibility. They are concerned with the physical transmission of signals over channels of a limited capacity, and they analyse, not the meaning of messages, but the probabilities of the various symbols from which they are composed. They are like mathematicians who order a Chinese meal by numbers, and are more than a little interested in the frequency of the various digits in those numbers than in the quality of the resulting food. For them, the amount of information transmitted by a message is equivalent to its entropy - its degree of improbability. By this criterion, *Finnegans Wake* is more informative than the *Guardian*, though the novel by no means conveys the greatest possible amount of information.

In fact, that maximum requires each letter (or each symbol from which the messages are composed) to be selected independently from the rest and all letters to have an equal chance of occurring at any point in the text. Certain "disorderly" music has this property, which may explain why it is so boring, but I know of only one language with it. In Václav Havel's brilliant satirical play, *The Memorandum*, there is a language called Chorukor (for writing inter-office memoranda) in which all redundancy is eliminated: an accidental change in one letter of a word yields another word, albeit one with a different meaning. Fortunately for most news-papers, English is highly redundant, and therefore relatively impervious to typographical and other errors of transmission. Indeed, it is sufficiently redundant at the level of words and phrases for certain forms of prose to be manipulated by machine - an idea that can be traced from Swift through the Surrealists to the work of Michael Freytag's novel, *The Tin Men*, who dreams of a simple probabilistic procedure for generating newspaper stories about the Royal Family.

The development of the concept of entropy is simply communicated by *Grammatical Man*, which goes on to explore its role in a variety of phenomena including the genetic code, the origins of culture, the development of natural language, the organization of the brain, and the mental processes of perceiving, remembering, and dreaming. Few scientists would have

attempted an enterprise of such scope, or would have been able to resist the temptation to use mathematics to ease the expository load. Few would write as engagingly as Mr Campbell, who is the Washington correspondent of the *Standard*, or would have taken pains to interview some of the major scientists responsible for the development of information theory.

The book, unfortunately, has some flaws. It embraces so much that readers may begin to feel that the author is educating himself at their expense. He seems to have learned little more than he needed in order to write the book, as is betrayed by the cumulation of small errors of fact and emphasis, and by the tell-tale signs of assertions that are almost right and sentences that almost make sense. Thus, to correct a sample of these minor blemishes: the second law of thermodynamics is not predicted by the law of large numbers (a theorem of the probability calculus); Chomsky does not believe native speakers have a tacit knowledge of all and only the well-formed sentences of their own language, but a knowledge of the principles underlying them; the musical intervals of thirds and sixths do not lie at the limits of the relationships that the ear can grasp but are merely those intervals that are most consonant; linguists before Chomsky did not work with finite-state grammars but with context-free grammars; and time cannot really be said to move forwards, or indeed to move at all, since movement presupposes time.

The most serious flaw, however, is reflected in the title of the book. Notwithstanding its central theme, there is a major hiatus between information theory and Chomsky's conception of grammar. Information theory suggests that "a sentence of English prose is a series of letters and words obeying certain statistical rules". But Chomsky reacted violently to this conception of language, and showed to his own satisfaction that such a probabilistic mechanism could never converge on proper grammatical English. The gist of his highly intricate proof is that there are grammatical dependencies in the language, such as the agreement in number of subject and verb, that hold even when the two are separated by an indefinite number of structures of the same sort. Although Campbell alludes to this argument, he evidently fails to appreciate its force, since he proceeds as though Chomsky's six expostions of ideas compatible with information theory, rather than one of the severest critics of its application to grammar.

The most surprising omission from Campbell's survey is meaning. He gives no account of any theory of semantics. Like Chomsky, he takes the view that grammar provides a structure for sentences, but has does not concern himself with what role, if any, that structure has in their interpretation. Similarly, he does not consider semantic theories of information. Such theories were developed in the early 1950s, notably by Carnap and Bar-Hillel, on the assumption that the more possible states of affairs that a message rules out, the greater the amount of information that it conveys. By this criterion, the *Guardian* may after all be more informative than *Finnegans Wake*, which is too obscure to rule out many states of affairs. There were certain technical difficulties in generalizing the theory to all discourse, but it has perhaps been overlooked for too long.

How much information does *Grammatical Man* communicate? On balance, it contributes to order in the world rather than to disorder. Its signal-to-noise ratio is satisfactory and would have been still higher had its text been filtered through the minds of some of the people whom its author interviewed. None the less, a welcome should be extended to a new scientific writer and to an entertaining book. At last, we can all know about entropy and pass the test for admission to the scientific club.

The Autumn 1983 issue of *The Use of English* contains articles, reviews, a consideration of CSE Oral Assessment by Bob Taylor, and an essay, "Structuralism and the Classroom", by Norman Beer. The magazine appears three times a year, and is available from Scottish Academic Press (Ref. U/E), 33 Montgomery Street, Edinburgh EH7 5JX. Subscriptions cost £4.95 (\$13) to individuals and £6.50 (\$17) to libraries.

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DUCKWORTH



# Against alternative history

Richard Dawkins

LAURIE R. GODFREY (Editor)  
Scientists Confront Creationism  
323pp. Norton. £15.25.  
0 393 01629 3

Imagine that there is a well-financed sect of passionately sincere people who believe that the Roman Empire never existed, and that the Latin language was never spoken. They publish books and produce slick propaganda films at their own expense. They challenge orthodox classical historians to public "debates", and a historian is too busy, finds the prospect distasteful, or simply can't be bothered, they proclaim that his beliefs obviously cannot stand up to public scrutiny. They receive invaluable help from an eminent philosopher who demonstrates that the theory of the existence of the Romans is technically "unfalsifiable" and hence is unscientific. For every hour of classical history that is taught in schools, they demand equal time for their Alternative History. In some states of the US they even succeed in getting legislation compelling such "equal time", and this, in turn, intimidates leading textbook publishers into playing down, or even removing altogether, offensive references to Romans in their history books.

The analogy with the creationist attack on evolution may seem far-fetched. Surely, it will be said, nobody could be quite so stupid as to deny that the Romans existed and that they spoke Latin. What about the vast corpus of archaeological research, the libraries full of written records, the survival of Latin in religious and other ceremonies, the numerous modern languages that seem to be lineal descendants of Latin? What about the Forum, the Coliseum, Old Sarum? Surely the heritage of the Roman Empire is all around us, it pervades all aspects of the civilization, our literature, our culture? Yes, all that is true, but the analogy is still a good one. The evidence for biological evolution – some of it is a detailed equivalent of written documentary evidence, written in the DNA code – is at least as strong as the evidence for the Romans and Latin. Both are as certain as anything we know, as certain as... as the fact that the Earth is round (though we learn from the book under review that even in this age of space satellites there is a flourishing Flat Earth Society based in California, with its own radio station and journal, in which its President "regularly calls scientists

'liars' and 'demented dupe fiends' and claims that the space program is a 'carnie game').

Now imagine that you are a professional classical scholar, accustomed to reading, writing and disputing about detailed minutiae of Roman history or literature, and that you suddenly find yourself called away from your scholarly pursuits in order to mount a serious defence of the proposition that the Romans and their language existed at all. Or in order to review a book devoted to defending that proposition. How could you take such a book seriously? What critical standards would you apply in your review?

This book, with the embarrassing title, *Scientists Confront Creationism*, is written by fifteen authors, many of them distinguished scientists, all of them with better things to do; it is a book of more than 300 pages devoted to refuting the privately published tracts of a gang of ignorant crackpots. If this summing-up seems arrogant, put yourself in the position of my imaginary scholar of Roman History. Or invent a similar parable for whatever happens to be your own field of expertise. What is fascinating about *Scientists Confront Creationism* and the other recent books with a similar mission, such as those by Michael Ruse and Douglas Futuyma, is that they really are necessary. It is not a fanciful parable, it is actually true that in 1981 the Arkansas and Louisiana State Legislatures passed laws requiring "balanced treatment" in the state schools of both "creation science" and evolution. Although the Arkansas law was overturned as unconstitutional in 1982, public support for "equal time" legislation "is fermenting in many other states of the Union". The Editor of this book tells us that

Without legal manacles, some school districts are nevertheless using creationist films, cassettes, and texts purporting to present only "scientific evidence" for creation in their science curriculums. Simultaneously, in school districts seemingly not affected by creationist "two model" politics, the subject of evolution is quietly disappearing from textbooks and curriculums. The body of "scientific" misinformation that constitutes the core of "creation science" is reaching a wider cross-section of the American populace and threatening the scientific literacy of its youth.

President Reagan himself, during his campaign in 1980, said "I have a great many questions about [evolution]... I think that recent discoveries down through the years have pointed up great flaws in it." And there were votes to be won with that kind of talk.

It could be argued that the "scientific creationists" are being moderate and responsi-

ble. They are not (nowadays) demanding the suppression of evolution in school science lessons, merely that the creation "model" should be given equal time so that pupils can make up their own minds. Shouldn't the true scientist support such liberal fair-mindedness? The final essay in the book deals with this question, putting an interesting argument that I have not seen spelled out so well before. Briefly the point is that the "equal time" demands, and specifically the Arkansas and Louisiana laws, are even-handed only in the following sense. On the one hand is special creation, a particular interpretation of a particular seventeenth-century English translation of one of the mutually contradictory Jewish origin myths. The other side of the balance-pan has to accommodate everything else – not just the neo-Darwinism of modern biologists but other more or less heterodox variants of evolutionism such as Lamarckism (still not dead in France), and even rival schools of creationism such as the "day/age theory" favoured by Jehovah's Witnesses, the "gap theory" of the Worldwide Church of God, "Progressive creationism", and the "Creation from chaos" of traditional Mormons, to say nothing of the enormous variety of non-Christian religious world-views. What about equal time for the theory that the world is borne on the back of a turtle? Or the theory that God created man from the excrement of ants? As the author points out, nobody would object to all these being given prominence in a class on comparative religion. But any attempt to legislate equal time in science classes for all opinions opens up a bottomless pit. An interesting sidelight to this chapter is that the "scientific creationists" of San Diego, the most influential spokesmen for the modern movement, and chief targets of this book, are convincingly shown to be just as intolerant of rival sects of creationism as they are of evolutionism.

If there are any readers of the *Times Literary Supplement* who doubt the fact of evolution, who doubt, say, that they are direct blood relations of baboons, cows and cockroaches, then let them read this book. They will learn much, and will find the style more patient and tolerant than the style of this review. Distinguished astronomers and geologists pile on evidence to show that the universe is more than 6,000 years old (the true age has another six noughts). An entire chapter is given over to explaining patiently that evolution does not contravene the second law of thermodynamics (it doesn't seem

to have occurred to the savants of the Institute for Creation Research with their doctoral degrees in "chemical engineering" and similar subjects that, if evolution really violated the second law, then in exactly the same sense must the development of a baby and the baking of a cake, and us for Creation itself... Another entire chapter is needed to dispose of the quaint little notion that the theory of evolution is an empty tautology. Another chapter nails the argument, rediscovered cyclically with pathetic eagerness, most recently by a pair of astronomers with enough education in elementary probability theory to know better, that life is too "improbable" to have arisen by "chance". There is a good chapter on the evidence for evolution from taxonomy (classification) – important this, since some museum taxonomists in Britain have courted cheap publicity recently by pretending (until challenged directly) to be opposed to evolution. And there are several chapters on fossils, especially the trendy topic of "gaps" in the fossil record (a particular favourite of BBC producers who think, wrongly, that it is useful for Darwin-bashing and is therefore "good television").

Readers who need no convincing of the truth of the evolution theory will get some good laughs from the book. Consider the creationist account of the fact that fossils appear in a definite order – mammals in higher strata than reptiles, etc. It was all due to Noah's Flood, you see. As the waters rose the mammals, being brainier and nimbler, took to the hills and so eventually drowned at higher levels than the reptiles who were too stupid and sluggish to get their act together, and perished further down the slopes. So all the drowned corpses are found neatly arranged in order. Good fun too are the ingenious solutions to the problem of how Noah crammed two specimens of all animal and plant species (12 million or so) into an Ark of precisely specified dimensions.

That gives a true picture of the intellectual standards of the creationists whom this book seeks to "confront". It seems like a one-sided confrontation: we are tempted to tell the scientists who contributed to the book to pick or somebody their own size and stop bullying defenceless little crackpots. Until we remember that these same poor little crackpots command a majority in at least two state legislatures and enjoy the clearly expressed sympathy of the President of the United States.

## L'homme machine

David Bodanis

JEAN-PIERRE CHANGEUX  
L'Homme neuronal  
419pp. Paris: Fayard. 120fr.  
2 213 01247 4

Jean-Pierre Changeux, a leading neurophysiologist at the Collège de France, has written what might have been yet another standard account of recent findings in brain biology, and turned it into a surprise best-seller in France. Before examining the way he did it, it is perhaps worth considering why he should have tried in the first place.

There is a great tradition of popularizing science in France, and for centuries professors at the Collège de France have had to give public lectures as part of their contract. Brain biology has blossomed in the past decade, and a major testing of its main findings on neurotransmitters, switching networks and the like, which Professor Changeux has done both accurately and smoothly, is always in order. It is also a field in which French research is among the best in the world.

Changeux presents his material in a forceful, confident way, and by the end of the book has drawn an exciting picture of the brain as a cabled-up box of billions of neurons, with most of the chemistry in them totally known, and all the links between them explicable by a good dose of topology. The march of history, he assures the reader, is with the neuroanatomists: "Un nouveau monde se dessine."

Or maybe not. While anything we think or do is certainly explicable in terms of cabled-up neurons and the chemical connections between them, no explanation of pre-set firing patterns is going to show why one action or thought is chosen instead of another. Changeux's approach is useful only as a post hoc description of what has already happened. The sole examples he gives with any generative power are those of simple, automatic reflexes. We learn, for example, that once orgasm begins cells of the rational cortex slow down, and that a hypothalamic hormone controlling long-term libido possibly gets blocked, thus explaining the subsequent refractory period that so many men report. That however is not quite the type of example one had in mind when the author promised to answer the question: "Qu'est-ce que l'homme neuronal?" or *Homo qui s'attribue sans vergogne l'épithète sapientis*. An explanation of the volitional acts often associated with orgasm would be more in order – be they puritan anguish, blurred admissions, fumbling fingers, or shared giggles – but that is something Changeux's pre-circuited view of the brain cannot supply.

He defends himself against possible critics with a variety of techniques. Sometimes it is simple affirmation: one chapter ends with the ringing declaration that "il suffit d'être un Homme Neuronale", while another considers that "Il est grand temps que l'Homme Neuronale entre en scène". Another time potential critics are derided as spiritualists, as out of date, or as suffering from "des peurs vénéralées", or even, soon to be "réduites au néant" (an intelle-

ctious threat, perhaps, for a reductionist in make). And another time again, rather than admit the strained causal reasoning that his use of simple animal examples produces, Changeux falls into an extraordinary face-saving "however" construction: "Le chat opéré et l'homme diffèrent sur bien des points... Néanmoins," or even at one point, "Le cerveau est certes plus complexe qu'un oviducle. Toutefois."

Why then has the book caught on so well in France? Perhaps because strict mechanism of this kind has deep roots in the French intellectual tradition. The mathematical physicist Laplace is reported to have explained to Napoleon that given the position and momentum of every particle in the universe, he could, using Newtonian mechanics, exactly predict the future. "Even the fashion of women's bonnets in ten years?" the Emperor asked. "Even that," Laplace is said to have replied. The search for underlying patterns that will constrain future events is a national passion in France, and many people are keen to accept any theory that seems to explain observables in terms of underlying, determining invisibles; they are only too happy to find that the mysterious subject of neurophysiology fits the pattern.

There is one flaw which undercuts many of the apparently compelling examples in Changeux's book: his continual use of pathological cases to describe the normal. It is well known that ablation of the eighteenth and nineteenth zones of the occipital lobe makes otherwise ordinary humans unable to name certain common objects. Given a pair of eyes

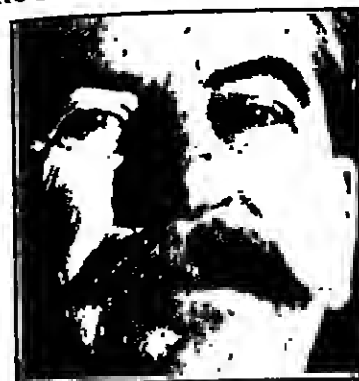
glasses to describe, such a subject is likely to say "There's a circle, another circle, and a stick, a crosshair, why it must be a bicycle." Changeux concludes from this that these optical zones are what control normal perception. That sounds reasonable until one considers the following example, well known to biologists through the efforts of Richard Levins at Harvard, and others. A stereo which has the elements of its speakers slightly unscrewed is likely to give out nothing but a hopelessly pitched hum when turned on, but one cannot reasonably conclude from this that the function of the screws on the speaker is merely to suppress the humming. Deductions by the logic of contrapositives, valid in many parts of science, cannot be used indiscriminately when it comes to the brain.

Roman Jakobson realized this years ago in his famous essay on aphasia. There he argued that pathological causes merely to work out types of association that might be dominant in different types of writing, noting that most authors had the capacity for several styles, and that cultural fashion will often determine which one is used. Changeux however uses the example of optical ablation to further his thesis about the pre-formed certitudes of individual behaviour. He does not have time for literary considerations, individual initiatives, or the quirks of history.

Postscript: I have to add a word of praise.

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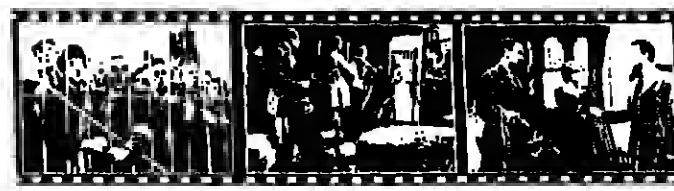
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## The life of a myth

Alan Millard

J. VANDIJK (Editor and Translator)  
Lugal Ud Me-Lam-bi Gál: Le récit  
épique et didactique des Travaux de Ninurta,  
du Déluge et de la Nouvelle Création  
Volume 1, 1477pp. 56 guilders.  
9004068724  
Volume 2, 181pp plus 88 pages of black-and-  
white drawings. 96 guilders.  
0004068732  
Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Centuries before St George and the Dragon, Sumerian scribes in Babylonia were copying the story of another hero who saved their land from the menace of a monster. The hero was Ninurta, warrior god of the South wind, and his adversary Asag, personification of disease. While celebrating Ninurta's festival, the gods were disturbed by his aide, who burst in with the alarming news that the earth had produced Asag, begotten by the sky. Asag, in turn, had caused the mountains to produce an army of atones as his helpers, and set himself up as rival to Ninurta. Chaos and disaster threatened all. Ninurta, furious, ravaged part of Asag's mountain home, and, against his aide's advice, marched on Asag himself. Unaccustomed darkness fell, "the day became dark as pitch". Asag attacked, falling on Ninurta "like a brick wall"; the land was devastated.

The champion was rebuffed, but not crushed. His aide discussed the problem with Ninurta's father, a senior god, and came back to overwhelm Asag's lair; "the ravines filled with blood, the dogs lapped it up like milk in the rebel land". But still Ninurta could not touch his rival, and his aide advised retreat. Ninurta, however, pressed forward and overcame Asag, leaving him like "a heap of broken bricks". Hailed as victor, Ninurta now decreed Asag's fate: he would be a stone himself, fixed in the Underworld. The chaos which Asag had brought had also to be dispelled; ice had enveloped the mountain, and then melted, so that the waters ran uncontrolled and no food could be grown. Ninurta built a wall of stones to control the waters, so enabling irrigation and agriculture and civilized life to develop in Sumer. He put his mother in charge of the mountain and its stones, then turned to the stones which had joined in the battle, cursing the ones that sided with Asag, blessing those that had helped him. An epilogue tells how man and gods praised Ninurta for bringing salvation, and he entrusted the reorganized land to Nisaba, goddess of wisdom.

Parts of this story have been available to us for decades, but now, after two years' patient research, the noted Sumerologist J. J. van Dijk, of the Pontifical Biblical Institute at Rome, has produced the first complete modern edition, and the publishers have printed it with clarity and elegance. Professor van Dijk

has reconstructed the text of 729 lines from almost 200 cuneiform tablets, many of them published here for the first time. While the tablets are often badly damaged, some fragments bearing only a few lines, they are sufficient to supply the whole poem, with only three small gaps.

These 200 manuscripts attest the popularity of the myth in Babylonian scribal tradition for over 1,500 years. They fall into three groups chronologically: the early, of nearly 120 pieces, copied between 1850 and 1600 ac; the middle, of only eight pieces, belonging to the eleventh century ac; and the late, fifty-five pieces found in Ashurbanipal's library at Nineveh and in Babylonian cities, copied from the eighth century ac onwards, the latest example belonging to the Seleucid era, after 311 ac. Thus the history of the text is as extensive and well supported as many of the classics, indeed superior to several of them, but this is not an isolated example of the wealth of written resources Assyriologists have at their disposal.

In this edition van Dijk has provided a splendid basis for studying this textual history. In Volume One he sets out a composite text of the Sumerian of the first period, of the second and third periods combined, and the Babylonian translation of the latter two periods. (The translation is noteworthy in itself for its evidence of knowledge of Sumerian late in the second millennium ac, and as an example of the phenomenon of translation at an early date.) Van Dijk's own readable French translation follows the older Sumerian version. In Volume Two the text is repeated, with every witness for each line transcribed, making comparison of the manuscripts of all periods straightforward. As the Editor explains, this layout is easier to follow than a critical apparatus of variant readings, which would be particularly dense in this case.

When was the poem composed? Following earlier students, van Dijk argues for its original in the time of the famous Gudea, a prince of Lagash, whose statues grace the Louvre and who ruled about 2100 ac under the patronage of a local Ninurta. That sets the composition two or three centuries before our oldest manuscripts were written, but recent discoveries in Babylonia, and at Ebla in Syria, show that other words being copied about 1800 ac had circulated long before. If its origin was in the court of Gudea, its function there is not known. No document mentions it as part of Ninurta's cult, sung in a temple, nor is there any hint of its being sung by story-tellers to an unlettered public. It may be that its main role was as a text for student scribes to copy.

Whatever its origin, a variety of older stories contributed to the whole. These engage van Dijk's attention in the introduction, and will arouse much discussion and speculation. There is a brief Flood Story without a human partici-

pant or an Ark: simply of the heaped-up ice melting in the mountain to bring destruction. Here van Dijk sees a reminiscence of the end of the last Ice Age. In other texts the Flood is one of Ninurta's weapons and so it is taken here, Asag representing all that came before the Flood. On the other hand, it may be that the Flood was a part of Asag's armory which his conqueror appropriated, something not unknown in history (cf. the Prince of Wales's "feathers") nor in the mythology of Ninurta himself. This is not a primeval flood whence the world was made, as in the Babylonian "Gencsis" story, or in Egyptian tales, but one closer to the Babylonian and Biblical Floods, and, like them, followed by new life-styles ("la Nouvelle Création").

Another element in the story is its allusion to the exploits of Ninurta in other combats, when he killed twelve monsters. The similarity of these monsters to those that Hercules killed is striking, although there are conceptual differences. However, a major purpose of the poem is to explain why some stones are highly prized

for carving or as gems, whereas others seem mundane ends as millstones or moulds. One hundred lines are devoted to Ninurta's blessing of thirty-two stones, and his cursing of another seventeen. To identify the stones is difficult, sometimes impossible, yet the general distinction between the two groups seems plain. The allocation of these stones to their various situations is narrated with an extensive use of punning, a favourite device of the Sumerian poets. Van Dijk explores these and many other matters in detail, assuming his readers to be acquainted with Babylonian literature and religion.

The myth of Ninurta can now take its place among the other remarkable compositions of the third millennium ac preserved for us on clay tablets. Its plot may be too simple to be entirely gripping but there is art in the way Ninurta's aide is portrayed as a foil to his master, in the numerous similes, and in the punning and number symbolism. All this was written down long before Homer, or the punning Blessing of Jacob in Genesis 49.

## The parsing of Arthur

T. A. Shippey

BEVERLY TAYLOR and ELISABETH BREWER  
The Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian Literature since 1800  
382pp. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer.  
£19.50.  
0859911365

The chronological list at the end of *The Return of King Arthur* gives more than 500 Arthurian items, with never a decade unrepresented since 1800 (though the 1960s are oddly thin). Since his long oblivion under the Enlightenment King Arthur has clearly been an unceasing inspiration to writers. What gives *The Return of King Arthur* its charm, of course, is that this inspiration has led, over the centuries, to totally distinct styles of interpretation, sometimes tangential to each other, often frankly antithetical. "Tirra lirra", by the river / Sang Sir Lancelot : so Tennyson in 1842. "Three years of discipline made Lancelot, not a merry heart and a capacity for singing tirra-lirra" : so T. H. White, in scorn, a century later. The fascination with training (and with inferiority or Oedipal complexes) bizzos White's era; the history of the Arthurian legend can hardly be bettered as a casebook in cultural styles.

What fascinated the Tennysonian-led movement of the mid-nineteenth century was, evidently, sex: the Arthur cycle became a series of half-voiced questions, in Arnold's *Tristram and Isolde* (how did Isolde fit in with him?), in Morris's *Defence of Guinevere* (would queens do that kind of thing?), most of all in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, where both the holiness and the eagerness of the poem often seem to come from the same root, an obsession with asexual justice. Tennyson's Arthur makes Guinevere grovel; through him the poet rebukes Morley's Arthur for his kindness, urging that the man who tolerates a wife's infidelity is "the worst of public foes"; behind the fall of that Round Table there lurks, weirdly, the trivial story of Pelleas and the faithless Sitriane. Maybe the question Tennyson would not face is "did Gawain really have all the fun?"

The euphemisms of that age — Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer list many unfamiliar ones round Arthur's birth, Mordred's conception, and Guinevere's adultery — provoke only mild nowadays, but the conjunction with modern biases tends to check this. It is clear, for instance, that where the last century saw sex, this one sees politics; and all too likely that our obsession with the Battle of Camlann as a breakdown in liberal policies will shortly seem as one-eyed as Mark Twain. What one comes to wonder, though, is whether the Arthurian legend ever provokes anything but self-scrutiny, has anything of its own to survive beneath reinterpretation; and here perhaps Taylor and Brewer only partly make their case.

It is their view that enduring stories must contain something to which we respond, even if we don't recognize what it is. This they label as "the element of myth", the "mythical dimension", "narrative" as opposed to "historical"

of symbolic meaning inherent in Arthurian myths" (to cite some of the praises variously given to Tennyson, T. S. Eliot and Joyce). Myth, however, stopped being a clear concept some time ago. As used now, it is all too close to that equally vague quality of being "poetical" which the nineteenth century flung at Arthur, and by which it meant, similarly, something more exciting than reality which the user of the word did not want you to call real, false or silly.

Silly, however, is what many early Arthurian "poetical probability" were, as Taylor and Brewer make horribly plain in their accounts of John Thelwall's *The Fairy of the Lake* (Arthur, Fatal Sisters, Incubus, Queen of Hell), or Walter Lytton's *King Arthur* (Gawain, walrus, Eskimo pygmies, Shield of Thor). And the silliness has by no means gone away, though modern stimulants are more likely to be Glenumbry, ley lines, solstice rituals and the conviction that "all myths are true". To this kind of credulity *The Return of King Arthur* is too soft. Praise of Charles Williams for "bringing out the power and the universality" of the Grail myth is all very well, but there was a reason his Arthurian never caught on (even among his friends): it was private, cranky, and depended on your understanding why Platonists see Iscariot's ruin as an equilateral triangle, why it was significant when he didn't, and what P.O.B. stood for, among much else.

The promotions of Edwin Robin and J. B. Cabell to minor status are not surprising either: the wish is being taken for the deed. Furthermore, in one area the bias of the authors of *The Return of King Arthur* makes them impatient with a particular style of response to Arthur as, and not evidently wider than any of the others — namely, the modern urge to set Arthur in a "historical" setting in sixth-century Britain. This has prompted whole sequences of popular history and archaeology (*The Age of Arthur*, *The Quest for Arthur's Britain* etc.) and while these are not literary works they are literary ancestors in exactly the same way as Jessie Weston. It would have been interesting to see how Arthur was squeezed into a political context, and how that context was redefined by power, fascism, and the decline of modern Empires. Taylor and Brewer, however, feel that the weight would be elsewhere: on myth, timelessness, "the deeper recurrent patterns of life and family relationships", the Fisher King, and the healing of national sterility.

This is a strong English tradition, and a respectable one. However, even C. S. Lewis, who spoke up for it as strongly as anyone, found time in his fantasy *The Horse and His Boy* to voice the fascination of Dark Ages, of elation in forests, Conradian regressions, seeping barbarism and desperate apostasies. Such a response could have had more space. But space is always limited and something else would have had to go — Scott's theory, maybe, that Tristram accidentally swallowed Mordred's cantharides potion; or Peacock remembering the Three Fatal Slaps of the Island of Britain. *The Return of King Arthur* is certainly a mine of material: every chapter could

THE NOVEMBER 4 1983 BIOGRAPHY

## The apostle of probability

Alec Cairncross

ROBERT SKIDELSKY  
John Maynard Keynes: Volume One, *Hopes Betrayed, 1883-1920*  
477pp. Macmillan. £14.95.  
035115996

A full-scale biography of John Maynard Keynes is no mean task. Ruy Hnrod, whose "official" biography has held the field since 1951, was in haste to bring together "all the varied aspects of his character and interests" while those who knew him were still alive and could contribute their recollections. "I cannot conceive", he wrote, "how a future student, however conscientious and able, who had had first-hand knowledge neither of Keynes nor of the intellectual circles which formed his environment, could fail to fall into grievous errors of interpretation."

Robert Skidelsky is just such a "future student" and recognizes the difficulty of conveying a picture of the many different worlds of thought, letters, arts and practical affairs in which Keynes moved. "It seemed to me", he writes disingenuously, "that I was having to write about things of which I knew nothing or very little, but which I sensed were important." To judge from this first volume, that does not appear to have been any great handicap; he has been at some pains to equip himself for the job. As for "grievous errors of interpretation" it is Harrod, it would seem, who has fallen into these and presented a "cleaned-up" portrait which conceals important aspects of Keynes's emotional and intellectual development. Memories may have faded; but so much has been preserved — thanks in part to Harrod himself — of the constant outpourings of Keynes and his friends in correspondence, diaries and memoirs that there is no lack of material for study. "I simply ooze letters", Keynes told Lytton Strachey; and others in his circle were equally unsuccessful in holding their ink. Where his biographers differ is in what they sense was important.

For reasons with which Skidelsky shows some sympathy, Harrod suppressed all reference to Keynes's homosexuality and tailored the quotations accordingly. He regarded it as a phase which Keynes grew out of — a "delayed adolescence" — and dismissed other parts of his early life and beliefs on the same grounds. No doubt he was also anxious to avoid giving offence to surviving relatives (including Keynes's mother) or producing the kind of reactions in America and elsewhere that might have diminished his influence on policy. But in 1983 it is hardly possible to ignore a "phase" that lasted some twenty years and was a central part of Keynes's life. As he himself remarked in 1938, of his prime objects in life, love came in long way first. When he was twenty-two he wrote "I put 'love first, philosophy second, Politics third and Politics fourth". But love was anything but heterosexual. Keynes and his friends believed that it should be matched only to worthy objects and regarded women as inferior in mind and body. It followed that love of young men was ethically superior. The "Higher Sodomy", as they called it in jest, was not just a sexual or emotional preference — though presumably it must have been that as well — but an ethical position.

This picture is borne out by excerpts from what can only be described as Keynes's love letters to Duncan Grant and others. Keynes was simply not interested in young women. When he went to Italy in 1906 with Mary Bevan and her two daughters, he wrote to Lytton Strachey: "I seem to have fallen in love with Ray a little bit, but as she isn't male I haven't had to think of any suitable steps to take. Of course, she practically is male..." Many of Keynes's closest friendships were among the Apostles, the secret discussion societies founded at Cambridge in 1820 and, like its contemporary, John Addington Symonds, still going strong. Although Harrod showed a not surprising distaste for the self-absorption of their system and still more for their bawdy and frivolity, it is not possible to brush aside the influence of the Apostles on Keynes's outlook. Skidelsky rightly emphasizes the importance of Keynes's attachment as a young man to the discovery of true beliefs and to justifying them by reference to these beliefs — an atti-

tude that has become increasingly rare. He worked out his ethical position between 1903 and 1906 in "a dozen or so papers" which he read to the Society and which still exist, although not referred to by Harrod. These papers reflect the veneration accorded to G. E. Moore by Keynes and other Apostles after the appearance of *Principia Ethica* in 1903 and their fascination with a religion that, as Keynes said in *My Early Beliefs*, made morals unnecessary — "meaning by 'religion' one's attitude towards oneself and the ultimate and by 'morals' one's attitude towards the outside world and the intermediate". It was a religion in which nothing mattered but states of mind — "timeless, passionate states of contemplation and communion" unrelated to action or achievement or consequences.

Skidelsky puts the development of this *ersatz* religion in context by tracing the repercussions of the collapse of belief in God after 1860 on ethical theory: the unsuccessful efforts of Sidgwick to find some basis for conduct that would do duty for Christianity and issue in the same imperatives; the decline of rules-of-thumb and of the willingness of the individual to take on trust the claims of the state, the family and other social institutions; the growth of reliance on intuitive judgments. The intellectual and social background to the Edwardian period is very skilfully outlined.

There is, however, too emphatic a contrast between the "bright sunlight" of the period with the "social and economic clouds of the 1880's and 1890's". Keynes, too, exaggerates in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* when he speaks of "this economic Eldorado... this economic Utopia" in which he was brought up. The years after 1900 were no economic Utopia. They saw real wages fall in absolute terms while interest and profits mounted rapidly; there was a tremendous outflow of labour and capital; economic growth was almost brought to a halt; and labour militancy developed on a scale unknown in the preceding decades. The question that needs to be asked is why nothing of this finds an echo in Keynes's writings before the First World War.

In those years it was not economics but probability that "absorbed Keynes's intellectual energies. We are told how his interest in probability originated, but nothing about his influence on later thinkers or the current status of his views among philosophers. This is a pity since probability played at least as important a part in Keynes's thinking as his struggles with the more scholastic aspects of ethics.

He had begun in 1904 at the age of twenty with a paper presented to the Apostles entitled "Ethics in Relation to Conduct". In this Keynes took issue with Moore, who had argued that when the results of an action can only be foreseen over the immediate future our utter ignorance of the far future precludes us from assuming that it is right to choose what offers the greater good within the period which we can forecast. It was Keynes's contention that we can act with good conscience in the pursuit of immediate good. "A statement of probability", he contended, "always has reference to the available evidence and cannot be refuted or confirmed by subsequent events." To say that an action was probably right implied no more than "this is the best estimate I can make under existing circumstances."

Thus Keynes's interest in probability sprang from his preoccupation with ethics and in particular with the remnant of utilitarianism in Moore. It was not an interest that died when Keynes moved on to economics. On the contrary, having wrestled for many years at the height of his intellectual powers with the logic of choice under conditions of uncertainty, he sharpened constantly on expectations and the uncertainty necessarily attaching to them long before economists sought to confuse his theories under the banner of "rational expectations". His examination of the logical process by which conclusions can be drawn from uncertain evidence underlay his study of the behaviour of financial markets and coloured his approach to mathematical economics and statistics as aids to judgment in all activities, from business to politics, in which decisions must be made in ignorance.

"The amount of risk to any investor", he wrote in 1910, "practically depends upon

the degree of his ignorance respecting the circumstances and prospects of the investment he is considering. It will, however, also depend on... the objective risk... arising, for instance, out of bad and unstable government or the uncertainty of the seasons." Hence the importance of a wide knowledge of non-numerical facts and the inescapability of recourse to intuition and judgment. Not that Keynes belittled the importance of numerical facts or statistics. He was a profound believer in speculative arithmetic so as to get a feel of the orders of magnitude relevant to his problem and was astonishingly swift in his assimilation of facts, whether numerical or non-numerical.

Half-way through the book we come at last to Keynes's entry into the world of administration and public affairs. He passed second into the Civil Service in 1906, well behind Niemeyer, scoring just over 40 per cent in economics and higher marks in English history than in mathematics. This was the only examination in economics that he ever took; apart from a single term under Marshall's supervision in 1905 and what he "soaked up" at home he had no formal training in the subject. This did not prevent him from returning to Cambridge from the India Office eighteen months later, on his twenty-fourth birthday, as a lecturer in economics — indeed, only with Pigou, virtually the only lecturer in Cambridge in economic theory. Within three years he was editing the *Economic Journal* and two years later still had produced his first book, *Indian Currency and Finance*. His membership of the Royal Commission on Indian Finance and Currency in 1913 shortly before the book's publication was due to the intervention of Edwin Montagu, who on several occasions gave Keynes's career a helpful push. His appointment brought him into touch with Blackett and the Treasury on the one hand and Austen Chamberlain and politics on the other.

To an economist the most interesting part of the book is the account of Keynes's part in the First World War. During the early months of the war Keynes was too fascinated by his work to have realized the full horror of the catastrophe. Once he did, he used his position in the



Treasury to provide ammunition for the anti-conscriptionists and for those who saw limits to the scale on which Britain could finance the war. The Treasury view was that there were not enough resources to make it possible simultaneously to raise large armies, produce the shells they needed and maintain exports at a level that would cover purchases from abroad. Lloyd George, once he left the Treasury for the Ministry of Munitions, took over the Treasury's arguments and was confident that existing resources could be supplemented from the labour of women workers and the credits that America would supply in her own interest.

Things came to a head in the autumn of 1915: sterling was selling in New York at a discount of 7 per cent, the Gallipoli expedition had failed and Kitchener had agreed to the French demand for a renewed military offensive, the result of which was 60,000 British casualties (and 150,000 French) at the Battle of Loos for no territorial gains. Keynes briefed McKenna that the supply of foreign exchange was running out. "Our present scale of expenditure is only possible as a violent spur to be followed by a strong reaction... the limitations of our resources are in sight." But by the end of the year the Cabinet had approved the plan for a great new offensive the following spring, and

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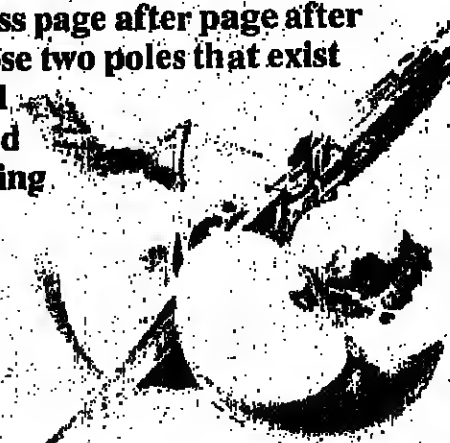
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Handwritten note: "The Africans" (vertical)





had accepted the principle of military conscription.

By this time Keynes had moved from arguing in favour of limited commitments that would free the resources necessary for subsidizing Allied armies to opposition to conscription in support of a war whose continuation he regarded as futile. Keynes applied for exemption from military service (although he had already been granted a certificate of exemption by the Treasury) and was called before the Holborn Local Tribunal on March 28, 1916. He informed the Tribunal the day before that he was too busy to attend the hearing and the Tribunal in turn informed him that his application had been dismissed because the Treasury had given him exemption for six months—an exemption subsequently extended without time-limit. In face of this evidence Harrod still maintained that Keynes could not be considered a conscientious objector, while Elizabeth Johnson, who produced the evidence, argued that his application was on the usual grounds that the state had no right to compel its citizens to fight.

This is not how Skidelsky sees the matter. Keynes was "too much of a political utilitarian" to take a stand on abstract right. His letter of application specifically accepted that there could be "conceivable circumstances in which I should voluntarily offer myself for military service". What Keynes was insisting on was that he should not be obliged "on such an issue as this to surrender my right of decision as to what is or is not my duty... having regard to all the actually existing circumstances". In other words, the time had come to seek a negotiated peace. He may already have thought, as he put it to Duncan Grant in December 1917, that "I work for a government I despise for ends I think criminal". He neither withdrew his application, as Harrod argues, nor lodged his application as a symbolic gesture, as Mrs Johnson contends, nor refrained from attending because he was too busy, as he himself pretended. The most plausible explanation of his conduct is that on February 28, 1916, when he applied for exemption, Keynes expected to have need of the certificate because he was thinking of resigning from the Treasury and that by March 28, when he failed to attend the hearing, he had decided not to resign and so had no need of a certificate.

Skidelsky supports this explanation by showing that Keynes was undoubtedly meditating resignation in January 1916. Five of Asquith's Ministers had resigned on December 29, and all except John Simon were persuaded to stay only on Asquith's assurance that the competing economic and military claims of an army of sixty-seven divisions would be investigated over the following month by a Cabinet Committee. Although Keynes drafted the Treasury section of the Committee's Report, it concluded that a larger army could be maintained for a short period at the expense of underpinning by the Allies and, after some hesitation, M'Kenna signed it on February 4 and remained in the Cabinet. Keynes, who had

tried to fight alongside M'Kenna, also resigned at his post. His Bloomsbury friends, whose view of the war he shared, felt that he had "rattled" and on February 20, Lytton Strachey put on his dinner plate "the conscientious objector's equivalent of the white feather". Keynes seems to have been undecided about resignation and in that state of mind submitted his application.

Why then did he fail to pursue the application in March? Skidelsky points to pressure from his parents not to "throw everything up"; to the understanding reached on March 6 between the British and American governments that the European Allies would invite President Wilson to summon a peace conference when "the moment was opportune"; and to Keynes's conviction that the money would run out soon and make the case for immediate negotiations unanswerable. When the months passed and the war did not end he could take comfort from the help he could give his friends in seeking exemption from combatant service. Keynes spent the rest of the war torn between feverish activity in staffing off a financial crisis and the hope that such a crisis would bring the war to an end. "I pray," he wrote to Duncan Grant at the beginning of 1917, "for the most

## Home thoughts on abroad

S. G. Checkland

JOHN CUNNINGHAM WOOD  
British Economists and the Empire  
299pp. Croom Helm. £15.95.  
07099 27509

How can one seize hold of British thinking on Empire during its heyday, between 1860 and 1914? One line of attack is to choose a group of writers who shared some degree of common identity, and this is what John Wood, a young Australian scholar, has done here. He has taken the category "British economists" and sought out what they published on the Empire. Because he proceeds on an author-by-author basis he does not set out and pursue the thematic components of empire as such, but considers them as they are taken up in turn by his successive protagonists. Thus it only gradually becomes apparent that the agenda for discussion consisted of the size and form of emigration and whether it should be encouraged; the principles necessary to guide the allocation of vast areas of vacant land in the colonies; investment and capital formation (with its implications both at home and in the empire); the use of tariffs and preferences as an integrative device, possibly leading to federalism; and sharing the cost of defence. These were the elements that, seen in interaction, governed these economists' thinking about the reciprocal relations between mother country and empire.

What is contained in this list and what is excluded defines the limits of the preoccupation with empire of the economists, and their approach to it. This of course raises the ques-

tion of the level of discourse at which they embarked, and the aspects which they left out. There was little concern with the long-term dynamics of empire, namely the forces that generate such external thrusts, and the apparent life-cycle that governs them. These were matters with which the historians and the philosophers of history concerned themselves, making the economists seem by contrast a little mechanical and superficial. On the other hand, the economists were all policy-minded, in that they intended their writings to provide working guidance to the public and politicians and those who advised them, taking the world as it stood.

The pivotal figure for Wood is John Stuart Mill. He is shown as representing the heritage of thought on empire passed on from the classical economists. It was dominated by Adam Smith, who rejected colonialism, along with the other paraphernalia of mercantilism: the theory of comparative costs should be uninhibited by state intervention, including the manipulations of empire. But Mill on empire, as on other matters, was equivocal. He accepted the policy recommendations of Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the colonial reformers of the day for colonial settlements, while repudiating the theory of under-consumption on which the case for these was based. Moreover Mill, the great advocate of individual freedom and of political system resting upon it, believed that for India the best arrangement for a medley of societies "not ready to govern themselves" and easy prey to the forces of disintegration, was that of a vigorous but benevolent and enlightened despotism, able to maintain order and impose standards. The white dominions, on the other hand, were capable of self-government and should have it; indeed, because they were free of an encumbering past, they could make democratic advances not yet possible in the mother country.

Life in the Treasury had a long-term influ-

ence on Keynes that was, in its way, as profound as that of life in Bloomsbury. Not one of his exchanges with other civil servants appear in this volume. But there is one passage in a letter to Beatrice Webb in which he summarizes what is still Treasury lore. My official superiors often remind me of the maxim traditional to the Treasury that no subordinate official can hope in the long run to become greater than the Chancellor of the Exchequer. And I suppose it is true that no Chancellor of the Exchequer can in the long run enforce a policy which is opposite to the prevailing current in the Cabinet, contrary to the temperament of an autocratic Prime Minister.

The book stops short at the point where Keynes had become a celebrity at the age of thirty-seven, but had as yet made no original contributions to economic theory. The picture of him that Skidelsky presents is somewhat unbalanced. His childhood and youth are dealt with in inordinate length, his later intellectual development too briefly. His relations with Bloomsbury are awkwardly interwoven with an account of his duties and activities in Cambridge and in Whitehall that is, by comparison, much less circumstantial. The reader gets too little sense of the supreme genius that Keynes undoubtedly was.

distribution of incomes in Britain there was domestic under-consumption. This caused a surplus of capital because it could not be profitably used at home; and it was the attempt to extend and control overseas empire. For this reason empire was a morbid growth, and he argued its disutility, restating some of the arguments of the 1860s. He rejected outright the idea that Britain was over-populated. The solution lay in a stimulus of home demand by income redistribution, though certain sections of interests, including those of financiers, investors and capitalists, stood in the way of this. Hobson, right or wrong, is thus the most comprehensive of the thinkers analysed here—Marx is not regarded as a "British economist".

Wood's economists did their thinking for the most part in England, indeed in London. They were concerned chiefly with organizing the interests of the mother country, often rather casually assuming a complementarity of products and of interests between Britain and the parts of her empire. Canada and the West Indies suffered severe losses as free trade did away with their preferences, and perhaps Canada's view of the mother country never really recovered from this. In the case of India there was often a clash between the India Office in London and those immediately responsible for administering the sub-continent; the controversy over the partition (not mentioned by Wood) was an example of this. Nor did the economists seem to take account of one of the great non-rational dynamics of empire, namely that of pre-emptive measures of the earth's surface were best secured, if you had the power to do so, in order to forestall the French or other imperial rivals. In this sense empire was an extension of the tensions and enmities of European history.

Wood introduces us to his protagonists in a helpful way, setting out what we need to know about each in order to grasp the form and degree of his preoccupation with empire. They are a difficult lot to reduce to order, especially because the economics of empire were not a central preoccupation for most of them. The text is heavily annotated, perhaps excessively so. It is not without significance for today, for although empire has been replaced by aid and migration is inward towards the old heart of empire, the question of the effects of intervention in less developed, formerly colonial societies is still a real one, dramatized by the North-South perspective. Should there be a great international agencies, or is it a matter of intervention by loans, gifts or guidance, and if so, how? The book is a valuable and mately pernicious, as is held by Peter Hall. Or is it the case that a developed country is inescapably linked with the formerly colonial parts of the world by economic necessity and moral obligation? It is true that the British focus has shifted since the final withdrawal from the white dominions and India towards Africa, but the general problem remains.

## A matter of mirroring

John Nash

SVETLANA ALPERS  
The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the  
Seventeenth Century  
300pp. with colour and black-and-white  
illustrations. John Murray. £25.  
025605122

The Art of Describing is the most brilliant, sensitive and provocative attempt to characterize the seventeenth-century Dutch art that I have read for many years. Svetlana Alpers's premise is that Italianate prejudices—the acceptance of Alberti's criteria for a well-made picture, Vasari's concept of art history and a faith in the *ut pictura poesis*—have blinded art historians to the distinctive constitution of Dutch art. Her thesis is that, unlike the Italians, "the Dutch present their pictures as descriptions of the world seen rather than as imitations of significant human actions". And in the seventeenth century, "already established pictorial and craft traditions, broadly reinforced by the new experimental science and technology, constituted pictures as the way to new and certain knowledge of the world". Pictures were like maps, mirrors and even the newly-examined *velum*: surfaces on which the world might be "set forth or inscribed". In Holland, writes Alpers, "everything is pictured".

In four long, densely wrought, discursive chapters, we are offered the evidence for this thesis from a host of witnesses: Constantijn Huygens, though an admirer of Rubens and

Rembrandt, is excited by the new worlds revealed by the telescope and microscope; the astronomer Kepler, recognizing the similarity of eye and camera obscura, likens sight to a picture—*ut pictura, ita visio*; the educationalist Comenius holds that "seeing is believing" and uses pictures to teach a language; and geographers, portraying distant places and events, liken mapmaking to portraiture; and always there was a need for the artist with "a sincere hand, and a faithful eye, to examine, and to record, the things themselves as they appear" (in the words of Robert Hooke quoted here). Much of this is well said. But some things seem wrongly said, while others remain oddly unsaid.

Alpers repeatedly contrasts the Italian "picture considered as an object in the world, a framed window to which we bring our eyes" with the Dutch "picture taking the place of the eye with the frame and our location thus left undefined"—that is to say: the northern picture, like the eye's retina, the camera obscura and the mirror, appears to reflect a fragment of "a world existing prior to us". It is the vision of a disembodied eye. But this ignores what historically and technically lies behind the difference between the Italian and Dutch pictorial traditions: the difference between a building and a book—the frescoed wall versus the illuminated page. And the consequences I am tempted to draw from this are quite the opposite of those drawn by Alpers. For while the fresco formed a fictive extension of an interior in which "significant human actions" were

actually performed, the pictures set among words on the page form their images not so much on a retina, embodied or not, but in the mind's eye—the imagination. Alpers deals tersely with the northern imagination: "working out of the mind was itself considered not a selection process or a matter of judgment, but a matter of mirroring". She does not pause over the implications for this of van Eyck's images of Heavenly splendour, Bosch's visions of Hell or Bruegel's panoramas of human folly.

Do Professor Alpers's strictures on imagination perhaps explain why she has so very little to say about the most familiar form of Dutch art, the scene from domestic life? It is true, her final chapter on "Looking at Words" does have a section on the popular motif of the letter-reader. There, with erudite virtuosity, she



Jacques De Gheyn's "Woman with Child and Picture-book", reproduced from the book reviewed here.

brings to bear evidence from epistolary manuals, an educational treatise, an anecdote about the Incas, contemporary speculations on optics and Holland's overseas empire to frame her perceptive interpretations of Vermeer's and Rembrandt's great paintings on this theme. Nevertheless, some 4,500 words (and an appendix) is a small part of so large a book that opens with a stirring polemic against "the recent rash of emblematic interpretations" of the domestic interiors of ter Borch and Vermeer.

Alpers is surely correct to challenge our contemporary iconographers, who constantly search for the moral lesson hidden in a Dutch picture, and I agree when she argues that northern images do not hide meanings "but rather show that meaning by its very nature is lodged in what the eye can take in", but one wishes she had said more about how it works in this genre of painting. The point, I believe, is that such a typical painting as Pieter Codde's "Woman holding a mirror" (National Gallery) is not to be identified as a rebus to be deciphered. (Is it a *vanitas* symbol? Do the cat and mouse on the floor symbolize the uncertainty of existence?) It is a modern version of the traditional personification of the sense of Sight, who always holds a mirror and has a cat for her companion. But Codde's sober yet sweet image, its sublimely modesty betrayed by a flash of scarlet skirt-lining, is more than that: it is an exemplification of the pleasures northern painting affords Sight. As Professor Alpers might have said: its "meaning resides in the careful representation of" its subject.

## Writing to pictures

Stephen Bayley

EDWARD LUCIE-SMITH  
A History of Industrial Design  
200pp. with 442 illustrations, in colour and  
black and white. Oxford: Phaidon. £20.  
07482217

Art historians are against treating design as a legitimate subject. This prejudice may be inspired by a preference for the pleasures of exquisite villa culture in Florence and Rome rather than the prospect of research in Stuttgart, Untermythen or Pittsburgh, but it is as strong for that. While Jakob Burckhardt and Siegfried Giedion devoted large portions of their most important works to design, and Giedion's English disciple, Joseph Rykwert, has argued persuasively that the history of art should in future be treated more as if it were the history of things (TLS May 24, 1974), the resistance to design remains: at the recent Toronto meeting of the College Art Association (a mutual-aid society of American art historians who meet to discuss how best to integrate research programmes with plans for ambitious Mediterranean holidays) the elders insisted to countenance the demands of a museum that a session be set up to discuss design history.

In Britain the subject is treated in a more sophisticated way, but although a number of polytechnics have made brave attempts to establish entire degrees in the history and theory of design, most are now foundering not only because of a dearth of books on the subject, but also because no one seems able to decide whether design history should adopt the methods and techniques of art history (with formal analysis, attributions, monographs, iconography and the rest of it), or whether it should adopt the more generalized methods of business and cultural history.

Meanwhile to fill the gap we have Edward Lucie-Smith's *A History of Industrial Design*. Although his last major book, *The Story of Craft*, anticipated his appearance in the fashionable arena of writing about craft and design, Mr Lucie-Smith can make no claim to specialized knowledge. His hectic and ambitious programme of book production can leave very little time for leisurely editorial discussion, meeting with the book designer or even original research, and in assembling his *History* he seems that Lucie-Smith has been thrown on his own resources. What these are we cannot be certain, because although he is described on the dust-jacket of *A History of Industrial*

*Design* as a "well-known" poet, it seems on the evidence of the volume that a flirtation with industrial design has spoiled his Muse: it is remarkable that a well-known poet should introduce so many clichés, arthritic sentences and so much banal speculation into so small a space. In the course of the five pages of the introduction alone, terms such as "seminal", "fountain-head" and "deeply significant" are used without apparent irony; one paragraph depends for its content almost entirely on a clumsy rewrite of an entry in Raymond Williams's blameless *Keywords* and a dramatic expression used to explain the traditional range of the industrial designer's concerns—"from a teacup to a jet aeroplane", as Lucie-Smith has it—is taken, without any form of reference or acknowledgment, from an American book that is now almost fifty years old.

But, despite all this, *A History of Industrial Design* is an important book because it is the first attempt in modern times to offer a synoptic view of its subject, and to be fair its range is impressive and its pictures are a useful resource.

The problem is that it is so full of error in conception and in detail that a conscientious reviewer, in trying to isolate precise faults in the course of a short piece feels rather as he would if he were trying single-handed to prevent a blimp from inflating. For example, Lucie-Smith's studied vagueness militates against accuracy in criticism: sentences beginning "It is generally held that..." are often presented in place of analysis. Furthermore, since the scope of the book ranges from pava painting to Concorde, a mere survey of the contents would be an extensive exercise in its own right. But I will concentrate on the errors of fact and misconceptions in the 10 per cent of *A History of Industrial Design* devoted to the history of design of the motor car: an expert might notice more.

It is facile to claim that the motor-car was actually "invented", as Lucie-Smith does: Carl Benz's application of the Otto engine to a horseless chassis was only the synthesis of a number of different developments which have separate origin going back as far as the beginning of the eighteenth century. No distinction is made between "aerodynamics" (a practical science) and "streamlining" (the fashionable expression of it); the first streamlined car was most certainly not made by Edward Rumpler in 1921, as Lucie-Smith states; a Castagnola-bodied Alfa Romeo, built for Count Ricotti, to name but one obvious example, predates it by ten years.

The Volkswagen and the Fiat Topolino are

said to have been designed as expressions of the respective Fascist governments of Germany and Italy. The facts are that Ferdinand Porsche's designs for a midsize, light car (which ultimately found form as the Strength-Through-Joy-Car and later as the Volkswagen) long predate Hitler's rise to power; the Topolino was the independent creation of Dante Giacosa, one of Italy's great automotive engineers, for the private FIAT company. Although presented here as a triumph of the consultant designer at work, Raymond Loewy's car designs were never, in fact, a commercial success: none of his clients who implemented his designs stayed in business for much more than ten years after he worked for them. Giogetto Giugiaro's first mass-market design was not the Volkswagen Golf, but the Alfa Romeo; a flat rear floor, as in the Fiat Panda, in no way precludes, as Lucie-Smith believes for his argument, the use of independent rear suspension; and so on.

Although Lucie-Smith early on attempts to disarm the evil eye by declaring his awareness of the potential problems of writing a history of design without the support of a rigid methodo-

logical framework, he has no alternative to offer by way of treatment or technique. Indeed, his methods are depressingly familiar, as scrutiny of the way the pictures fall within the text will reveal. It would seem that *A History of Industrial Design* was in the first place assembled by a picture researcher and Lucie-Smith's job was to compose a text that did its best to unite the images which had been found. Nothing else can explain the number of bizarre and irrelevant pictures. So a book which purports to be a scientific "History" is debased to the level of the "writing to pictures" discipline that used to flow so much current-affairs television.

When this technique is married to an unreliable text the result is clearly unsatisfactory, but *A History of Industrial Design* does have its virtues; as a glibly assembled assemblage of ideas and images it offers the same uncritically enthusiastic interpretation of the designers' role as the books of the 1930s, 40s and 50s by Cheney, Bertram, Read, Bel Geddes and Loewy. But instead of their heroic eloquence it offers flaccid cliché and in place of their vision, scissors and paste.

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MICHAEL JOSEPH

## LITERATURE

**Dickens Studies Annual**  
Essays on Victorian Fiction  
Volume II  
Edited by Michael Tregear  
1983. AMS Press. Cloth £25.50.  
PAPERBACK: The Hero's Shame, Robert Newton; *Blackmail* in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Black House*, by Alexander Welsh; Reading Dickens' Writing, Robert Tracy.

**More About the Night With the Dragon**  
Sewall 2200b-5193.  
Commentary, Edition, and Translation  
By Raymond P. Tracy Jr.  
1983. University Press of America. Paper £15.50.  
The dragon in *Beowulf* is presented as an old thing who would cheat death through the power of his hoard. This restored identity clarifies the thematic discussion of death and survival which unifies the poem and places it in the mainstream of English literature.

**British Literary Magazines: The Augustan Age and the Age of Johnson 1700-1780**  
Edited by Alvin Sullivan  
1983. Greenwood Press. Cloth £31.50.  
*The Augustan Age and the Age of Johnson* profiles contemporary magazines that began publishing during the eighteenth century, and lists, in two appendices, another eighty-three magazines of the period.

**British Literary Magazines: The Romantic Age 1780-1850**  
Edited by Alvin Sullivan  
Winter 1983. Greenwood Press. Cloth £31.50.  
*The Romantic Age* profiles roughly eighty-five titles beginning in 1780 when the publication of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* signalled the advent of the Romantic Age. Among the magazines treated are the *Edinburgh Review*, *Punch*, *The Monthly*, and the *Critical Review*.

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# Not so great a game. . .

## Malcolm Yapp

**SANDY GALL**  
*Behind Russian Lines: An Afghan Journal*  
 194pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £8.95.  
 0 283 99039 2

**HENRY S. BRADSHER**  
*Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*  
 332pp. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.  
 Paperback, \$12.75.  
 0 8223 0563 1

In August 1982, coughing, sneezing and grumbling, there stumbled into Afghanistan a group of television reporters and cameramen led by Sandy Gall. Their purpose was to make an hour-long television documentary of the guerrilla war being waged in the Panjsher valley by Ahmad Shah Masud and his followers. And, after many tribulations, they achieved their end; the film was shown in November 1982. Gall's book is mainly the story of the tribulations. To the media men Afghanistan was one protracted culture shock. Reading Gall's doleful account it is evident that the irritation of the journalists with what was perceived as Afghan incompetence, lack of time-sense, and general unreliability was matched only by the dislike of their Afghan guides for the obstinate, complaining infidels with whom they had been afflicted. It is only an hour's walk, the Afghans would say. Not surprisingly, when the journalists eventually plodded on blistered feet into their destination three hours later, they felt hardly treated. To the Afghans, however, it probably was only an hour's walk.

Of all the troubles visited upon the television men the greatest was their inadvertent separation from their equipment, and infuriating it must have been to watch the Soviet and Afghan Government forces launch a major assault on the Panjsher valley and not to be able to film any of it. Gall and his companions scuttled among the bombs and shells looking for their equipment, gathering it in piece by piece. Last of all, after the fighting was over, they found the camera. Obliging mujahideen staged inconsequential actions for the benefit of the television men, but it was hardly what they had come so far to film. And so they gathered up their trappings and plodded out of the valley. Fate, however, had not yet had its fill of them and they were obliged to make their way back to Pakistan by an even more uncomfortable route than that by which they had reached the Panjsher. For those with a long

memory of Afghan travel it may be said that it embraced part of Eric Newby's short walk in the Hindu Kush, together with some five passes in the region of 15,000 feet on the way to Chitral.

The members of the Gall expedition were quite unprepared, mentally or physically, for the Afghan situation. They had not a word of Persian between them and relied on finding interpreters; the consequence was that they wandered about shrouded in ignorance, replete with misunderstandings and often obliged to resort to the techniques of babyhood in order to indicate their wants. And, although, bearing in mind their ages and occupations, they were fairly fit, they were far from being fit enough for what they encountered in Afghanistan. In the circumstances all credit to them that they avoided disaster and came out with film which, if it was not very good, was not as bad as it might have been. For this happy result Gall himself deserves some praise.

Readers in search of information about the present situation in Afghanistan will not learn much from *Behind Russian Lines*. There is some description of the effects of war in the Panjsher, a eulogy of Ahmad Shah Masud, a brief account of the organization of his troops and supply system, and an appeal for Western help on behalf of the Tajik leader. Those who want a fuller analysis of the problems of Afghanistan should turn to the study by Henry Bradsher. It is claimed on behalf of Bradsher's book that it is the most comprehensive account of recent events in Afghanistan that has yet appeared, and there is much justice in the claim. Anthony Hyman's *Afghanistan Under Soviet Domination 1964-81* (Macmillan 1982) is better on the resistance, and Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two-Party Communism* (Stanford 1983) has more information about the People's Democratic Party (PDDA), but, all in all, Bradsher's book is the best general account available. Although the author uses no Persian material he combs the Western and some Russian sources thoroughly and adds information from unpublished US Government documents. Four chapters are devoted to the period before 1978 and the remaining two thirds of the book to events which have taken place since the 1978 Saur revolution. Bradsher's judgments are moderate and sensible. He is sceptical about allegations of Soviet direction or of close Soviet involvement in the events which led to the 1978 revolution, and doubtful about the extent of Soviet control

over Afghanistan before December 1979. Nevertheless, he believes that now the Soviet Union is in Afghanistan it is there to stay: Afghanistan is destined to be another Mongolia.

Bradsher's book may mark the limit of intelligent reconstruction, interpretation and speculation based upon the limited information presently available to Western writers. The question may be asked: what new information may eventually give us a fuller picture of what has happened in Afghanistan during the past five years? One obvious answer is Persian sources, including newspapers, PDDA pamphlets and the publications of refugees, especially those appearing in Germany. These sources may explain the origin of PDDA poli-



Russians versus Afghans at Pul-i-Khristi in 1985

## . . . in impossible terrain

### Peter Levi

**NIGEL RYAN**  
*A Hitcher Two in Afghanistan: A Journey Behind Russian Lines*  
 210pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £8.95.  
 0 297 78363 7

Afghanistan is a wonderful back-drop to a travel book. The country is crisscrossed with extraordinary delights, eccentric dangers and amazing survivals. It is really very wild indeed, as the Russians are discovering to their cost. One of the oddest things to emerge from this useful account is how little travelling there, or at least the subjective feel of travelling, has altered since the Russians arrived. You get shot at more often and on a more regular basis, and there are air-raids as well as natural disasters; that is all.

Nigel Ryan undertook his journey in order to make a television film about the resistance to the Russians, but the true subject of his book is his own survival. He writes with obvious honesty and a certain intolerance about himself, and he makes Sandy Gall, leader of the expedition, appear a much jollier character and a reliable friend in need. But as a piece of writing, Ryan's book is a respectable performance, and it records a startling adventure.

Sometimes he can be dull. The pages of build-up and initiation are too long, and we are well inside Afghanistan before he suddenly makes one's life up. But throughout the book there is a sprinkling of excellent observations; he writes here and there with unusual brilliance and purity. On the abstract matters he finds it hard to avoid cliché, particularly about politics, and I am not surprised that he foresaw what his film would be like before shooting it, and was bored. When the Russians mount a punitive expedition, and the resistance leader Massoud is fighting a difficult defensive battle, Ryan writes "I have seen many executives under pressure with their jobs on the line", but that this of course was something different. A similar but worse moment of failure occurs over a grisly but to my taste hilarious incident which he treats with a few words, more in sorrow than in anger about our different cultures. This was when one of his fierce hosts, wiggling his tail I am sure like a Labrador, began to screech in the earth, in order to dig him up a dead Russian for the camera. Ryan was not widehearted enough about the

idea, notably the controversial land mines and the factional disputes within the party, and second possibility is a fuller exploitation of Russian sources, going beyond the usual *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, etc., to the type of material used by John Erickson. In the long run, however, we await the arrival in the West of a talkative defector from the central committee of the PDDA. Considering the record of ruthlessness within that party it is surprising that a member of the Politburo has so far sought refuge outside the Eastern bloc. Surely, one hitherto mute, inglorious Trotsky is even now preparing his departure, his briefcase now packed with diaries, minutes and copies of Soviet directives? His position as a head-of-state is already assured.



Russians versus Afghans at Pul-i-Khristi in 1985

Afghan resistance to relish this offering. Still, of all those who have written about Afghanistan in English, he is one of the most sympathetic, and above all one of the most fully truthful, the most painfully honest. His self-criticism is personal, it is no more interesting than anyone else's, and one feels longing for the unselfcritical Victorian, when it concerns the expedition's mistakes and hair-raising. They survive by the skin of their teeth.

In fact, this most open-minded and adventurous of writers does get an attack of traveller's melancholy in his last chapters, over the Muristan who are not as dramatically nasty as he makes out. The small of civil hanging over a village, the facial decadence and the suggestion of incest, let alone the mysterious incidents which guide clinics someone has suggested his name only what one feels when one is frightened and tired, and far from home. Doctor, later St. George Robertson, mugstical author of *Kajras of the Hindu Kush*, died bowing like a Muristan in the course of his researches. I have always thought it was because they laughed at his inflatable rubber bath.

Alan, one cannot always laugh away the dangers of their punitive expeditions. The destruction of the Panjsher valley and others like it is as terrible in our eyes, and in the eye of the camera, as the Glencoe massacre. The Afghans are not fighting a war on our behalf; they are resisting desperately on their own and taking what revenge they can (they have five Russians alive in Herat). But they are not united people, even against the Russians, and Ryan is too intelligent to hope, very rightly, even, for the remote help we could offer them. The most admirable European in this book, he probably intends, is a French doctor who learns Persian and spends his allotted months with the resistance. But the most attractive human beings of all are the very old, perhaps the old man who had built a huge stone shelter in a tree as an air-raid shelter.

This is Ryan's first book, and an able one. Several ways. The ritual incantations he recites, the records of travellers on the road, the never grow tired. Are you well? Are you in harmony? give a particular irrelevance to the helicopter gunships, and a particularly awfulness to the bombing and a particularly tramps. Certainly the further Nigel Ryan goes from being a television executive, the better the book is.

# Wellesly, Tallii, Emmii

## Angela Leighton

**CHRISTINE ALEXANDER**  
*The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë*  
 139pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £19.50.  
 0 631 12991 X

**STEVE DAVIES**  
*Emily Brontë: The artist as a free woman*  
 170pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £6.95.  
 0 8535 4597 7

**P. J. M. SCOTT**  
*Anne Brontë: A New Critical Assessment*  
 144pp. Vision Press. £8.95.  
 0 85478 275 3

I am the chief Genius Brannii, with me there are others; she, Wellesly, who protects you is named Tallii, she who protects Parry is named Emmii; she who protects Ross is called Annii. It was Branwell who was the lucky recipient of those toy soldiers which first set the Brontë children writing their sagas of Glass Town, Angia and Gondal. Charlotte's ninepins served for native Ashantee tribesmen, defeated and colonized by the Duke of Wellington, who gradually metamorphosed into the Byronic Duke of Zamorna and King of Angia. The enthusiastic participation of all the girls, and particularly Charlotte, in these tales of military and amatory adventure, must soon have unsettled Branwell's confidence of being "chief Genius".

The *Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë* by Christine Alexander is a delightful, scholarly, fully documented account of the development of the Glass Town and Angian sagas in which Charlotte and Branwell collaborated. Alexander has deciphered and ordered a mass of previously unpublished material, including the children's sketches and watercolours, and succeeds in closely relating these diffuse, fantastical stories both to contemporary political affairs and in Charlotte's development as a writer. Her serious, scholarly management of these flagrantly repetitive, contradictory, baroque and exotic tales is something for which many readers will be grateful.

Yet the main interest of the book lies not so much in the author's painstaking paraphrases of these tales as in her suggestive interpretation of them. She points out, for instance, how frequently the figures of the unloved orphan, the jealous older woman and the paternal lover recur in these early works. She searches out the implications of Charlotte's adopting a cynical male voice, particularly in those stories that tell of the immoral proceedings of the Duke of Zamorna. She suggests that the mixed fascination and mockery with which Zamorna's illicit affairs are described prefigures the moral unconvictionality of the later novels. Certainly, there is a sense in which sexual passion and creativity are closely associated in these early tales.

All here is passion and fire unquenchable. Impetuous sin, stormy pride, diving and soaring enthusiasm; war and poetry; are kindling their fires in all his veins, and his wild blood boils from his heart and back again like a torrent of new-sprung lava.

Such descriptions as these suggest how far the Byronic hero-villain of Angia becomes a source of equivalently liberated energies in the writer. This is a lover, not by whom to be seduced and betrayed, like the many pale heroines of Angia, but whom to rival in passion; the passion of "war and poetry". Such passion is intensely celebrated here, but will be located with difficulties when felt by the heroines of the later works.

When Charlotte went to teach at Roe Head School, visions of Zamorna and of Angia continued to haunt her with a brilliance of realization that reveals already the imaginative possibilities; for her, of being homesick and love-sick, "how distinctly", sitting in the schoolroom at Roe Head, saw the Duke of Zamorna leaning against that obelisk, with the mule riding Victory above him; the faro waving at his feet. . . . On another occasion, from her room, she saw "the ladies" of Angia "come into the room to get their curl-papers. They performed the lying on the bed and I heard them talking about me. Angia was to provide an escape, a paradise and practice-hell for writing until Charlotte was twenty-three and began to reject fantasy for something real, "solid and solid". The fact that she never

fully realized this ambition for the prosaic is testimony, perhaps, to a lifelong homesickness for Angia. The passionate poetic blood of Zamorna beats again, though more constrained, in Lucy Snowe and Jane Eyre. Christine Alexander has written a book which is both pleasurable and informative. It richly satisfies its own limits, but also opens the way to new, retrospectively attentive interpretation of Charlotte Brontë's major novels.

Stevie Davies's *Emily Brontë: The artist as a free woman* is a readable, personalized, free-wheeling meditation on the "chief Genius" of Emily Brontë. She discusses Emily's life and work from a Jungian perspective, which emphasizes the archetypal myth of the earth-mother, interpreting *Wuthering Heights* as a "myth of rebirth", of the soul seeking its "lost male counterpart" and as a myth of "universal forgiveness". This optimistic reading stresses the indeterminate and universal qualities of Emily's work, and grounds them in some absolute mythological scheme born of the "shared psyche of the race".

Unfortunately, the book relies rather heavily on the author's personal and vague accounts of sacrificial myths, and contains no references to other criticism, no notes or bibliography. As a result, its interpretation comes to sound both quirky and bland. A somewhat hagiographic biography of Emily is followed by an unashamedly personal meditation on the poems and prose, interspersed with homely descriptions of the landscape round Haworth and of life at the parsonage as Stevie Davies imagines it. Her discussion of *Wuthering Heights* is a curious blend of subjective observation and mythological decoding. For instance, she assures us that "If you have seen a little girl in a deep sleep . . . then you have seen Catherine's death as Emily Brontë meant you to imagine it." Such an observation is strangely resistant to the hysterical violence and foreboding realness of Emily's own account. Later, she claims that Heathcliff's beating his head in rage against a tree is a baptismal image, and that his blood suggests "the sacrificial slaughter" of "ancient mystery religions". Somewhat, this large-scale reading of the novel as a fertility myth tends to float free of the very particular human hatred and despair which, it seems to me, go mainly unredeemed and unforgiven.

This interpretation of *Wuthering Heights* in terms of a universal consolatory myth of rebirth and forgiveness is not helped by the lack of attention to other critics, or by such rash generalizations as the dismissal, for instance, of all the Romantic poets when, by contrast to Emily Brontë, are devoted "to nature at its harmlessly vegetable or rocky effects, such as Wordsworth's 'rocks and stones and trees' ". If nothing else, this is a carelessly unsuitable quotation. The landscape of the Lucy poems is as haunted and terrible as the heath after Catherine's death, and is at least as likely a source of Emily's inspiration as the myth of Psyche. Although this book is warmly and sympathetically addressed to its subject, it relies too unquestioningly on its own confidence of novelty.

In reading P. J. M. Scott's *Anne Brontë: A New Critical Assessment* one learns, among other things, of the failings of modern parenthood, the advisability of corporal punishment, the shortcomings of the Synod of the Church of England, the horrors of its liturgical reforms, and that the hair-styles of punk rockers are patently just "desperate cries for attention" from a generation improperly reared by liberal parents. Sandwiched between these harangues for our times is some discussion of Anne Brontë's novels and poems; a discussion which centres mainly on the relevance of her work to personal morality. In the last chapter Scott takes the opportunity of disagreeing with Anne's "heresy of universalism" and expounds his own belief in the doctrine of hell which, he obligingly anticipates, will be "inflammatory of ill temper for any who have patience to read it through". However, patient readers are again rudely reminded upon in the last pages: "If the reader wishes to curse me for a stung ape complacently setting down all this theology of damnation, let him save his breath. I write with thrills of fright rippling up and down my being. The moody and immodest didacticism of this book is, it seems to me, unrelieved by any thrills for the reader."

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# Boasters on their dangerous journeys

Hermione Lee

V.S. PRITCHETT  
More Collected Stories  
320pp. Chatto and Windus. £12.50.  
0701127457

A fat, lazy, fifty-year-old estate agent called Rogers, living in a country town in an alcoholic "stupor of inertia and incompetence", makes friends with another fat drunk called Pocock, who says he is a well-known painter. Pocock dies, no one seems to have heard of him, and Rogers takes home one of Pocock's paintings, an embarrassing nude. "He took the picture because, without knowing it, he felt it symbolized the incomprehensibility of the existence of other people."

The sentence, and the story ("Pocock Passes", 1938), are characteristic. V.S. Pritchett's stories penetrate "the incomprehensibility of the existence of other people" by making the most unpromising characters reveal themselves in absurd and painful ways. Very often the penetration of such lives will centre on a comical object – a set of false teeth, a ladder – which the reader, though not the characters, recognizes as "symbolic". "Pocock Passes" is typical, too, for its dingy semi-rural setting and for the rather shame-faced relationship between the two men, each of whom "has passed the crest of his life".

It is reasonable to compare such characters with Dickens's shabby-genteel optimists or Wells's anxious suburban heroes, but Pritch-

ett's England is more peculiar and less predictable than those parallels suggest. The *curriculum vitae* of any of his characters will be found to have odd quirks or gaps. The bossy interior decorator, so irresistible to middle-aged women, gives up Chinese drawing-rooms for a girl who likes dogs and horses. Mr Lavender, ex-Navy, in the garment trade, displays the portrait of a great-uncle who "made a quarter of a million in the bacon trade – and was the best judge of claret south of the Wash" – but who turns out not to be a great-uncle at all. A harmless window-cleaner marries a crooked wife, a respectable locum finds himself acting as a go-between for a very odd marriage, a henpecked grocer finds his house taken over by his barmy landlord. Pritchett's favourite type is anxious, earnest, well-meaning, easily bothered.

Lavender returned, and seeing her near the picture, straightened it and then put his blotter straight on his desk, saw that the telephone books were in the right order on Eeles's table. Then he got his coat from the coat stand, remarking that Eeles had only one bad habit: he often used Lavender's peg by mistake. "Small things," he said, "irritate."

But the attempts to keep order are doomed by the "incomprehensible" strangeness of things. The only way to keep a brave face is to make yourself up. Most of Pritchett's characters are boasters, liars, story-tellers, or, at the least, self-deceivers. When a daughter says of the father whose second marriage is a bad mistake, "It was his chief vanity that he understood his own behaviour", she speaks for them all. There is an excellent story in the earlier

Collected Stories called "The Sailor", narrated by an ineffectual country gentleman who takes in the sailor, Thompson, as a conk. Thompson's confusion on land is pathetic; every errand he makes is a victory over alien territory.

When he came back he was excited. He had the look of someone stupefied by incomprehensible success. It is the feeling a landman has when he steps off a boat after a voyage. You feel giddy, clumsy, surprised at your survival after crossing that bridge of deep, loose water. You boast. So did Thompson – morally.

Moral boasting after dangerous journeys in alien spaces is the condition of life for Pritchett's characters. Some, like the old lady in "The Liars" or the museum attendant in "On the Scent", live entirely inside their inventions. Some have a single lie which they cling to, like Mr Lavender's "great-uncle" or Pocock's painting career. Boasters respect each others' subterfuges.

"Been having trouble with my foot," said Mr Pocock defiantly at Rogers. "It's the weight you carry," said Rogers. "I get it myself."

Mr Pocock, as one heavy drinker to another, appreciated the tact of that lie. The uncomfortably intimate pairings (banal versions of Conrad's "secret sharers") that recur in the stories – Rogers and Pocock, Lavender and Eeles, two Irish brothers, a film producer and researcher, a bankrupt father and the son he despises – suggest the question: How close can you be to someone without finding them out? Pritchett sees that people can give themselves away with every word they

speak, and still go undetected. So, while the characters are often innocently unperceptive, the narrative is wickily observant. He is fully conscious of his ear; his people, as people, wear their verbal mannerisms like masks, a once protecting and revealing themselves.

Even now, Bunny Manningtree won't say what he was doing in the war. He simply says he was going to his bottom in the Shetlands, "pooed around" for a few months in the United States, and had something to do with one or two "wheezers". . . . The war as if he were a schoolboy who had just bought a tin of glass of beer at a joke shop or written to another boy in invisible ink. That delight in detail is the outstanding quality of Pritchett's work. The narrative is markedly ironic and precise even when the stories (as with one or two in this collection) are slight. The man "whose slow mind lay down like a dog in the domestic basket", the woman who keeps "breaking helplessly into autobiography", the conversationalist who ends the night "sudden in his own anecdotes, like a fruit in rum", the ship's officer "with an unreasonable chin and emotional knees", the lady "whose upper part suggested a box at the opera" which she was somehow living and smiling: this is the kind of detail that is everywhere, and which is so much a part of the charm of the collection which ranges from the 1930s to the late 1970s. One of Pritchett's characters is a mineralogist who believes that "no fact, however small, is unimportant. He all the facts together and one gets the whole". If people were crystals, Pritchett would be their mineralogist.

And even a Polish translation seems inevitable.

To call 1934 a "romance" would be as false as calling it an historical novel, although it could be described – like *Il Conformista* – as a "political" novel. The story does involve fascist Italy, the Nazis and the Night of the Long Knives, which has a decisive impact on at least two of the characters. The strange Russian emigrant and village whore, Sonia, is said to have been involved with Azzurro, the Socialist Revolutionary leader and double-agent, but it is not the historical content which is important, nor even the reminder that Dostoevsky remains Moravia's supreme literary model. The "history" is part of the technique of the novel and it is only "political" in the sense that, as Luzzo says, "in a regime of terror it is impossible not only to distinguish truth from falsehood, but also to distinguish the truth of falsehood, if I may be excused a play on words again, from the truth of truth". Luzzo is not a Jew – as he has to prove in dramatic circumstances – he is not attracted by Shapiro's offer to get rich, he is not yet a convinced socialist, he fails to consummate his love-affair, he does not commit suicide. But, like Moravia in 1934, he is only twenty-seven, and although he does not possess the elemental strength of the women he encounters, he does have his Kleist manuscript to finish. If he can "save himself through writing" he will have discovered a way to "stabilize despair". Those who read him may be encouraged to distinguish between the truth of falsehood and the truth of truth whether they are in love or in politics, in Capri or Mongolia, in 1934 or 1984.

Much of the novel is sexually explicit and most of the rest is erotic. When the Holy Office placed Moravia on the Index, they described him as a writer of the *fabula amorale*. Moravia's conviction is that the conflict of ego, the clash of human wills and the whole question of dominance is most simply and vividly brought out by writing about sex. It would be remiss of a writer if he relegated all this to the background. He would also possibly lose some of his readers. As Moravia says, even if we are not all men and women of the world, we are all at least Freudians and Marxists. After *La Romana*, in which he wrote about a prostitute in the first person – which many feminists found both offensive and arrogant – 1934 will not create a

# Dancing for the dictator

Michael Scammell

PAUL ISKANDER  
Sandro of Chegem  
Translated by Susan Brownberger  
389pp. Cape. £8.95.  
024421591

Paul Iskander is likened, on the jacket of his novel *Sandro of Chegem* (published in Russian by Ardis in 1979, but not available in its entirety in the Soviet Union), to Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and the novel, by implication, to *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The claim is far-fetched to say the least, and of course Iskander cannot be held responsible for it, but it is instructive to consider some of the reasons why the invocation of Marquez is so wide of the mark.

Iskander's tale of a tribal adventurer who comes from Iyabaut to top dancer in a folk dancing troupe, then retires to escape arrest and becomes a celebrated toastmaster, is set, *de Solitude*, in a remote country at the outer edge of empire. Abkhazia, a tiny land at the eastern end of the Black Sea, once known to the Ancient Greeks as Colchis and later much lullied by the competing ambitions of Georgia, Ottoman Turkey and Imperial Russia, is an excellent vantage point from which to contemplate the follies of empire building. And the events described in this Macondo of the eastern Mediterranean also span about a hundred years of turbulent history, starting with the period just after Russian annexation in the nineteenth century, continuing through the Revolution, four years as part of the independent republic of Transcaucasia, ten years as an independent republic within the Soviet Union, reduction to an autonomous region of Georgia, occupation by the Germans and "liberation" towards the end of the Second World War, not to speak of Abkhazia's involuntary role on the roller-coaster of Soviet history: NEP, collectivization, purges, world war, more purges, de-Stalinization, de-Khrushchevianization.

The subject-matter is rich in potential for irony and satire, especially when viewed from the village of Chegem, perched high in the mountains behind Abkhazia's capital city of Sukhum (best known as a holiday resort). Iskander, who has shown a gift for satire in the

past (notably in his send-up of Khrushchev's agricultural policies in *The Gantibex Constellation*), has peopled his novel with a cast of colourful characters: Kolya Zarhidis, the wealthy tobacco merchant who stakes his entire fortune in a gambling game against a cattle dealer; the princess who takes Sandro for her lover; Sandro's shrewd and successful peasant father, Khagug; the cowardly collective farm chairman, Tinur Zhavamba. And there are equally fascinating historical figures: Prince Oldenburgsky, a pre-Revolutionary graduate in Abkhazia (attacked by Lenin in his time); Noy Zhordania, effective ruler of independent Transcaucasia under the Mensheviks; Nestor Lakoba, who took over Abkhazia under Soviet rule; and of course those wildly successful Transcaucasians, Stalin and Beria.

Iskander has combined these elements in eleven chapters, each one a separate tale loosely woven around the character of Sandro, which take him from pre-Revolutionary times up to the era of Khrushchev. The progress is not strictly chronological, but it is useful to summarize it in that way. At the outset we find Sandro as the young lover of a Svanian princess and getting into a tight spot with the Mensheviks. In other early chapters he earns the praise and indulgence of Prince Oldenburgsky, gets involved in Kolya Zarhidis's epic gambling game and tries to play the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks off against one another during a Civil War incident. The climax of the story comes when Sandro, as one of the stars of the Abkhazian Folk Dance Ensemble, dances for Stalin, and is later selected to accompany him on a fishing trip. Later still, as danger from the purges mounts, Sandro purposely injures his knee and retires to his native village of Chegem, where he becomes a celebrated *tamada*, or toastmaster, and between whiles a watchman over the village orchard.

The trouble is that the book sounds more exciting even in this bald summary than it is in the reading. It suffers from two large faults. First, there is a failure of nerve. Iskander leaves us in no doubt as to his negative views on the impact of Soviet rule on Abkhazia, but, except in the very middle of the book, he prefers to keep these dangerous topics at arm's length, treating them to gentle ridicule instead of lashing them with the whip of satire. As a result, neither Sandro nor any of the other

characters in the book ever comes truly alive. They remain figures in a comic opera, all lukewarm pleasures and pale regrets, in which the true-life monsters have walk-on parts. Eyes are averted from the bleak realities of modern Russia and the whole is lost in a haze of whimsical sentimentalism.

Only in two central chapters does Iskander break out of this haze. "The Story of the Prayer Tree", about the paradoxical fortunes of an ancient, hollow walnut tree that serves as the village oracle and the tricks it plays on the villagers, offers a wonderful parody of Soviet attitudes to religion. "Belshazzar's Feasts", where Sandro performs for Stalin's benefit and witnesses the effect the dictator's alternating bouts of seemingly spontaneous cheerfulness and sullen suspicion have on his sycophantic courtiers, is a memorable addition to the growing Russian literature on Stalin, given extra force, perhaps, by Iskander's intimate knowledge of Stalin's Georgian origins; this is one of the chapters that remain unpublished in the Soviet Union.

Two chapters, alas, are not enough to save a book (though they remind one of the strength of Iskander's talent when he is on form). The other (and related) major defect is the novel's slack and nervous prose. Iskander writes not only as if in ignorance of the entire modern movement in fiction since James Joyce, but also, which is worse, as if Bely, Zamyatin, Bulgakov and Platonov had never existed. His leisurely, anecdotal narrative, with its clumsy asides to the reader, its plethora of "incidentally" and "by-the-way"s, seems as if it had been written in Abkhazia rather than in Moscow.

There must be many and complicated reasons for this: cultural isolation, the difficulty for independent writers of obtaining any competent criticism once they abandon the sheep-pen of the Writers' Union, personal tensions. Iskander is a brave and admirable man, attempting the almost impossible: to remain in the Soviet Union and write truthfully. But it does him no favours to praise his prose indiscriminately or for the wrong reasons. Not the least of the evils of that political system that Marquez is said to admire is the equality with which it attempts to ensure that none of its subjects will write with the freedom of expression enjoyed by Marquez.

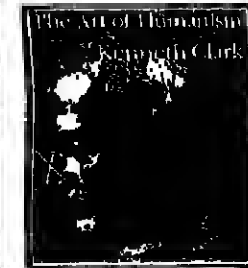
vaders practised on their slaves a form of torture which destroyed all their memory and intelligence. They became mindless *markuris*, and Altimov sees the successors of the Zhukovzhans in those scientists and politicians who plan to control people, so that "a person will always do everything in accordance with the central programme". Such an Orwellian vision of the future is firmly rejected by the hero of the novel, Yedigel; his creator has instead made him a protester against blind authority. Yedigel is "a man who will always ask himself questions and never be satisfied with easy answers". His devotion to the old traditions extends to religion, though he is not himself a believer; but he recalls the words of half-forgotten Moslem prayers of burial, and says them over the body of his friend.

As the story ends, Yedigel goes home, determined to protest to every authority he can find about the closure of the old cemetery within the territory of the cosmodrome; he will never give up until he obtains satisfaction. Altimov in this latest novel affirms the individual Soviet citizen's right to think for himself, to make his protest against official bureaucracy, to join individuals of other nations in the common struggle for greater sanity in world affairs. Coming from a senior "official" writer and a member of the *Novy Mir* editorial board, this message has a cheering ring to it, reminiscent of the best days of that journal under Alexander Tvardovsky.

*Russia Dies Laughing* is a compilation of jokes from Soviet Russia, edited by Z. Dolgopovla and illustrated by Jak (125pp. Unwin. Paperback, £1.50). The jokes fall into categories such as "Politics and Politicians", "We Are Catching Up With America", and "Russian Sketches: Drunk and Sober".

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# The truth of falsehood and the truth of truth

John Whittam

ALBERTO MORAVIA  
1934  
Translated by William Weaver  
297pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.50.  
0436285533

Readers of *Corriere della sera* will know that Alberto Moravia has recently returned from Mongolia to write about pastoral socialism. Most Italians will have seen him on television attacking both the terrorism of the Red Brigades and the legitimacy of the state. Those who were students in 1968 will remember how he entered crowded halls to listen sympathetically to their millenarian hopes. They will find it both comforting and disconcerting to realize that this eminent writer who achieved instant recognition with his novel *Gli Indifferenti* in 1929 is still among them and still an outstanding figure as he approaches his seventy-sixth birthday. It is comforting because he seems as permanent as the red cliffs of Capri or the slopes of Monte Mario, a reassuring symbol of continuity in a rapidly changing world. But this *scrittore scomodo* is disconcerting because of what he says and does not say, because he and his characters are never quite what they appear to be. For instance, he is not really Alberto Moravia but Alberto Pincherle, the son of a Jewish architect and the cousin of the Rosselli brothers martyred by fascist thugs in 1937. Perhaps his most revealing work, because it conceals so much, is *La Mascherata* (1941) where Latin America is Italy, where all the

characters are in disguise at a fancy dress ball and the book itself is written in a style which is not Moravia's. All this elaborate camouflage owes much to fascist oppression and censorship – and it is interesting that the Duce failed to recognize himself in *La Mascherata* – but this is only a partial explanation.

1934, published in Italy last year and now skilfully translated by William Weaver, will disappoint neither Moravia's admirers nor those reading him for the first time. For the former, there will be an element of *déjà vu*, the recurrence of old themes and techniques, but as they will already appreciate, seeing or looking is a complex process in Moravia. On the boat to Capri – the same setting as that of *Il Disprezzo* in 1954 – Luzzo conducts the early stages of his love affair entirely through expressive glances at the young German girl Beata, and this is continued in a hilarious episode with some sunglasses. Voyeurism is also explicitly mentioned and underlined in the scene where Luzzo watches the naked Beata being photographed by her husband as Venus rising from the waves and then being forced by the husband to photograph them both. Moravia's perceptiveness, hypersensitivity and voyeurism have often been attributed to the fact that he was bed-ridden at the age of nine by bone tuberculosis, and spent his early manhood in a sanatorium as a passive spectator. He wrote *Gli Indifferenti* in such a place in northern Italy and, like Luzzo in the present novel, decided "here I could save myself through writing". Indeed, Luzzo has a special mission in going to Capri. It is "to stabilize despair", in order to prevent himself from committing

suicide. This is another familiar theme; in *L'Autunno*, Guido spends most of his time contemplating driving over the edge of a cliff to break with conformity but, like so many Moravian males, he fails to act. Luzzo has been studying Kleist, a man who committed suicide with his mistress, and desperately seeks to evade this fate by courting Beata, only to find that she too has a copy of Kleist and is looking for a partner who will minkle love and then enter into a suicide pact. Apart from passing Kleist and Nietzsche to one another, and a brief conversation in the sea, they fail to come to grips with the problem; Beata and her husband return to Germany to be replaced by her twin sister Trude and her mother Paulin. However, they too are not what they seem. The knowledge that Beata is a professional actress will provide the clue to the second half of the book but it would be otiose and unfair to follow the plot through to its tragic end.

Much of the novel is sexually explicit and most of the rest is erotic. When the Holy Office placed Moravia on the Index, they described him as a writer of the *fabula amorale*. Moravia's conviction is that the conflict of ego, the clash of human wills and the whole question of dominance is most simply and vividly brought out by writing about sex. It would be remiss of a writer if he relegated all this to the background. He would also possibly lose some of his readers. As Moravia says, even if we are not all men and women of the world, we are all at least Freudians and Marxists. After *La Romana*, in which he wrote about a prostitute in the first person – which many feminists found both offensive and arrogant – 1934 will not create a

# Protest and prayers

Mary Seton-Watson

CHINGIZ AITMATOV  
*The Day Lasts More Than A Hundred Years*  
Translated by John French  
384pp. Macdonald. £8.95.  
034693751

Chingiz Aitmatov, now in his fifties, has been publishing stories and novels since the late 1950s. He is well-respected in the Soviet Union and has won several State prizes. He subscribes to the doctrine of socialist realism: his heroes are usually stalwart Kirgiz workers, and he makes extensive use of folk legends. Yet his writings have from time to time contained veiled or explicit criticism of the Soviet State. His novel *Farewell, Gul'zary*, published in English in 1970, was an account of the crushing by Stalinist officials in the 1950s of all initiative on the part of the peasantry – symbolized by the shepherd and his horse. In his latest book, now translated by John French, he makes a plea for international cooperation, and attacks the deep suspicion of all things foreign which has been so characteristic of Soviet leaders.

*The Day Lasts More Than A Hundred Years* is a ponderous book, not lightened by the translation, but a rewarding one. It has many heroes, not always happily plaited together. It is the story of Yedigel, who works at a remote sheep-station somewhere on the East-West railway line that runs through the desert in South Kazakhstan. When his old friend Kazangap, who has resolved to bury him according to traditional Moslem custom, in the old cemetery of Ane-Belt, the small caravan – a tractor with trailer of the body, an excavator to dig the grave, and a tank, and six mourners – sets off on a trek across the desert. During the journey Yedigel thinks back over events of the

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# COMMENTARY

## The connoisseur of boom and slump

David Walker

The Burrell Collection  
Pollok House Park, Glasgow  
RICHARD MARKS, ROSEMARY SCOTT,  
BARRY GASSON, JAMES K. THOMSON and  
PHILIP VAINKER  
The Burrell Collection  
160pp, with colour illustrations. Collins. £8.95.  
000 4356802

RICHARD MARKS  
Burrell: A Portrait of a Collector  
Sir William Burrell 1861-1958  
207pp, with colour and black-and-white  
illustrations. Glasgow: Richard Drew. £12.95,  
paperback £6.95.  
0 86267 033 0

Glasgow's Burrell Collection is unique in Britain. In formation and in atmosphere it is akin to the great museums created by Sir William Burrell's American rivals earlier this century, and its great silver-roofed glass building in Pollok House Park is in fact the work of a New York-trained architect, Barry Gasson. With an area of 137,241 square feet it is the largest museum built in Britain this century, even though it can display only 40 per cent of its 8,000 exhibits at any one time. Externally it is, however, sensitively understated in accordance with its donor's wishes for "a plain building", sheltering half its frontage in an angled woodland edge which has been allowed to determine its plan-form as if it had been an urban building line. A long simple masonry structure with something of the character of an early monastic church reaches forward in welcome, its late fifteenth-century doorway giving a hint of the medieval treasures within. A glimpse of the magnificent early sixteenth-century portal from Homby Castle draws visitors through the foyer into a semi-medieval court, far more splendid than any photographs suggest, finely executed in pale red sandstone and housing the interiors brought from Burrell's own Hutton Castle. At the centre of the court the international plane of the collection is heralded by the one major purchase made since Burrell's death, the giant Roman vase excavated from the ruins of Hadrian's Villa; fig-trees and the high pine and glass roof structure contrive to restore to it something of its former orangery setting at Warwick Castle. Beyond the court lie the galleries proper, opening into a high perimeter ambulatory looking out into woodland

and punctuated by medieval niches which, as Richard Marks observes, "give an age and sense of permanence to the modern fabric of the building and act as a framework for the smaller exhibits". In some areas it is rather as if a medieval complex had been partially restored and roofed over for the better preservation of its fabric and artefacts.

Sir William Burrell gave his collections to Glasgow as long ago as 1944 but, firmly resisting all attempts at municipal guidance, retained an unrelenting control over its continuing rapid development right down to his death at the age of ninety-six in 1958, and indeed beyond: Gasson's final realization at least internally, by very much on the lines Burrell visualized when in 1952-54, recognizing that the projected delays in finding a site would otherwise result in architectural control slipping from his hands, he fixed its internal character by buying up huge consignments of architectural features from the Hearn collection at absurdly depressed prices. It was the final astounding masterstroke of a career which was itself, in both business and collecting, a masterpiece of long-range financial planning.

The Burrell Collection, compiled by its keeper Richard Marks, with a fine introduction by John Julius Norwich and contributions from the architect, deputy keeper and assistant keepers, is a well-produced volume, demonstrating the range of Burrell's collecting in a series of historical synopses written around the 300 exhibits illustrated. Since the text does not extend beyond these to the other exhibits, and still less to the 60 per cent not currently on view, they make the collection seem much smaller and less significant than it actually is. It is not at all satisfactory still to have to refer to back-numbers of the *Scottish Art Review* and the Arts Council catalogues of 1975 and 1977 for further information on what the collection actually does hold. Its sheer scale and quality are such that detailed catalogues of at least the major holdings are absolutely essential. Marks's biography, *Burrell: A Portrait of a Collector*, gives a more vivid impression of its riches and tells the story of its creator, perhaps as well as it can now be told. Although far from humourless, Burrell was a very private man who left few personal papers. Marks has thus got little closer to him than did Peter Savage a decade ago when he found that the architect Robert Lorimer had, in his letter to the Australian architect R. S. Dods, chronicled vivid

glimpses of his early collecting. These Marks has supplemented with some equally revealing letters relating the unhappy end of their eighteen-year friendship which had much to do with the development of Burrell's passion for late medieval art. An analysis of the family shipping line, largely culled from David Burrell's serial, *Burrell's Straits*, published in the magazine *Sea Breeze* in 1975, illustrates how a fortune, modest by the standards of his multi-millionaire American rivals, was made and maximized to achieve comparable results by the accurate forecasting of boom and slump several years ahead. He ran his line, entirely confined to tramp steamers, not for glory but for cash: he built technologically advanced ships when prices were low in 1888 and 1893, sold out in the boom years of 1898-1900 and repeated the exercise in the 1940s slump. Further orders at rock bottom prices in 1908 and 1912 brought this second fleet to a total of thirty-eight ships which he sold out at a profit of up to 350 per cent in the boom of 1913-16, most after a decade of hard use. Continuity through these fluctuations in the size of his fleet was provided by a managing agency and a network of agents which took him across Europe several times a year.

Similar underlying principles can be found in Burrell's collecting. He backed his own judgment from a studied analysis of the art market based on an acute observation of the wares of the dealers all over Europe: he questioned them until he knew as much as they did, and in his earlier years he did not hesitate to sell out to re-finance his ship-owning; the idea of making it first a permanent, and then a public collection, perhaps to put it beyond the reach of the estate duty office, did not come until after he was knighted for his services to art in 1927. His policy was, broadly, to buy works of established worth which were not overpriced and preferably underpriced, and to be endlessly patient in waiting for the right moment to buy. Thus, except for his Venetian "Judgment of Paris" and Bellini "Virgin and Child", he largely avoided Italian Renaissance art, partly because of his outspoken dislike of Duveen and his overpriced market, but more because of his personal preference for northern European art and late medieval art in particular. His gothic tapestries ("you get more for your money in tapestries") are bettered only by those of the Metropolitan Museum in New York; his collection of stained glass can compare with that of any museum in the world and only a very few

collectors excelled him in late medieval style. In painting he bought two Mantegnas, a Cimabue and several other major fifteenth-century pictures; and after the Duveen market bottomed out he was able to add superb portraits by Rembrandt and Hals. In French painting he had a distinctive taste which took in Le Nain, Chardin, Oudry, Géricault, Courbet, Bonin, Manin-Latour, Courbet, Bonin, Monet, Sisley, and most particularly Degas with twenty-two items, of which only about a third are currently on view. His love of textiles extended beyond tapestry into Tudor and Jacobean embroidery and most particularly into Persian, Indian and Caucasian carpets, his collection rivaling that of the Victoria and Albert, while the patina of Chinese ceramics appealed to him so strongly that his holdings will probably never all be shown.

In his final years Burrell set himself, at the age of eighty-six, to master buying the art of the ancient civilizations, achieving some degree of success in a very thin market, apparently with the aim of making the collection more "educative", taking in the scope of the British Museum as well as that of the Victoria and Albert. This last campaign was conducted against a background of disagreement with Glasgow Corporation officials over the use of what had been his own money: sadly even Dr T. J. Honeyman, who originally won Burrell's confidence, showed a chronic lack of sensitivity. Something of their consequent fear of his unforgiving nature when crossed more than once seems to have been communicated to their successor Marks, whose biography is at times less sympathetic than it might have been. He unnecessarily retails rather too much gossip of Burrell's alleged meanness, and at least his habit of switching off the electricity at night must surely have been as much due to fear of fire in such a treasure-packed house as Hutton. Carefulness in small things like stamps and generosity in large was characteristic of many Scots of Burrell's generation. There can be few episodes more poignant than the Burrells' last comfortless months in their bleak half-wrecked castle, its remaining treasures stripped out and packed off to a municipality in no great hurry to house them in the rural setting he had stipulated. Cleaner air, developments in air-conditioning and the gift of Pollok have now made it possible to bring the collection within the city boundaries to a far finer "plain building" than those envisaged in the 1950s. It has been worth the wait for those of us who have lived to see it.

# COMMENTARY

## A compulsion to simplify

Frances Spalding

Henri Gaudier-Brzeska 1891-1915  
Henri's Yard, Cambridge

Early death may ensure an artist posthumous fame, but it is often the kind of fame that romanticizes and obfuscates. The sobriquet "Savage Messiah" has been served on Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, first by H. S. Ede's fictionalized biography, and subsequently by Ken Russell's film based on it. Yet as Wyndham Lewis remarked after Ede's book appeared: "Gaudier was a placid genius of gentle and rounded shapes, not a turbulent 'savage' one at all." Elsewhere he asserted that the sculptor was "a good man on the soft side, essentially a man of tradition—not 'one of us'". Nevertheless Gaudier shared Lewis's interest in the machine, contributed to his magazine *Blast* and was the only sculptor to sign the Vorticist manifesto. But he also gave his allegiance to the Omega Workshops, even after Lewis's notorious dispute with Roger Fry. Similarly in his art, harsh geometry never wholly drove out a liking for curved, natural shapes. His ability to absorb influences from many sources and to straddle rival factions makes Gaudier a diverse artist whose bohemian life, tragically cut short at the age of twenty-three, has invited a storytelling that has obliterated the ambiguities inherent in his work.

Thus if his oeuvre is familiar, it still provokes questions. This exhibition, for the most part, avoids modern casts and concentrates on carvings, plaster and drawings. Moreover, not since his memorial exhibition in 1918 have so many original works been assembled in one place. In the catalogue Serge Fauchereau shows how Gaudier's love of animals originated and developed in his art; Sarah Shalovsky, Rod Brooks and Jane Beckett collectively analyse the earliest texts on Gaudier and the strategies employed in the "construction" of the Savage Messiah myth; and Jeremy Lewison provides a discussion of the artist's problematic chronology, together with catalogue notes that sum up and extend existing scholarship.

The sculptures themselves have a missive quality, that belies their actual size. Mostly, Gaudier worked on an intimate scale and towards the end of his life, at T.E. Hulme's request, produced toys or charms that could be carried in the pocket and played with in the hand. In his carvings he repeatedly exploits the mass of the block, folding one form into another in "maternity" so that the design itself expresses the tenderness of the subject. Like-

wise his treatment of animals is compact, the forms compressed with affection and often witty effect. His natural compulsion to simplify made him sympathetic to the Vorticists' interest in abstraction; and after Pound had introduced him to Hulme, who argued that the use of geometry would lift man "out of the transience of the organic", Gaudier's work became sharper and more impersonal. By this stage the protective gentleness of his earlier carvings had become fascination with the grotesque: in "Bird swallowing a fish" the violent act takes on sexual connotations, the harsh stylization bringing their union to brute paralysis.

All of the work included in this show was produced over a span of just four years. Gaudier's progress, from a naturalism largely

"the one as obscure and incomprehensible as the other". She did not appreciate the increased economy of image that resulted, and suspected *arriviste* motives behind Gaudier's move into abstraction. Nevertheless he began to employ the triangle, possibly derived from the shape of Pound's beard, in the place of facial attributes and for a while this motif became his signature.

Yet the varied changes in style indicate creative irresolution. After the subtle understandings that he brings to his portrayal of animals and the human figure, his marriage of primitive influences with Vorticism seems awkward and forced. It is, moreover, unlikely that the machine aesthetic would have sustained his interest for long: when carving the butt of a German rifle in the trenches, he tried



Gaudier-Brzeska's portraits of himself and Sophie Brzeska, 1912 and 1913, from the exhibition reviewed here, and reproduced in his catalogue (61pp, £3.25, 0907074 189).

inspired by Rodin to the incisive angularity of "Torpedo Fish" (1914), was achieved in sudden leaps and changes of direction. His development followed no clear route, but meandered through various cultures, drawing ideas from Polynesian, Chinese, Assyrian and Egyptian art as well as from Epstein, Brancusi and his Vorticist colleagues. His changing aesthetic meant that his loyalties were split, between Ezra Pound, whom he first met in 1913, and Sophie Brzeska with whom he lived and whose name he appended to his own. Sophie felt that Gaudier decided to align his sculpture with Pound's poetry; and for a period she found

for, as he said, "a gentler order of feeling, which I preferred". Compared with the inexpressive rigidity in certain of his Vorticist drawings, his earlier, larger than life-size busts of Brodsky and Alfred Wolmark display impressive rhythmic vitality. In the Wolmark it begins in the tilt of his bow-tie, follows round the turn of the head and the twist of the nose and culminates with triumphant confidence in the heavily gouged clumps of hair. Whether attracted or distracted by Pound's and Hulme's theories, Gaudier gained as much from Rodin, who taught him to discover movement even in a calm face.

Not so the second Pinter's friends. In their profession, at least, nothing seems to have daunted them. When he was over seventy Wellard would stand up in a bad light to fast bowling without flinching. Playing against Larwood in the latter a prime he admitted, when pressed by Pinter, that "He was a bit quick". His friends were equally unperceptive. The night before a match in Madras, Joe Hardstaff (Notts) sat up till five in the morning drinking glass for glass with the local Maharajah. At five o'clock Hardstaff fell under the table, and was put to bed insensible. That morning he went out to bat before lunch, batted for five hours, hit twenty-four fours, and made 213.

Pinter himself was at least once a menace to McMaster. In *The Merchant of Venice*, as Basanlo, he accidentally said "bucketa" instead of "ducats". McMaster's Shylock took up the word, and went on with an instantly improvised text: "W! every bucket in six thousand buckets were in six parts and every part a bucket I would not draw them." Such men cannot be overthrown. The first Pinter clearly has not modelled his characters on them. They are creatures of Pinter's brain, not copies of Pinter's acquaintances. One may not always agree with him. He can think of no reason why McMaster never played in England after 1932, when he appeared at Stratford. I saw him then, and found in him none of the desolation Pinter ascribes to his Lear. What is really odd is that the dramatist who has done more than any other to persuade us that the world is a place of nameless terrors should, when he looks back on his own past, see only days of golden sunshine and nights of glory.

Harold Hobson

HAROLD PINTER  
Players  
Cottesloe Theatre

*Players* consists of two monographs by Harold Pinter, one on Aneurin McMaster, for whose company Pinter in his early years barnstormed a considerable part of Ireland; the other on Arthur Wellard, the Somersetshire and England cricketer, in whose company he sometimes played when they appeared together for the Gaieties Cricket Club, a group of genial fellows who wandered round the Home Counties, as Pinter had wandered round Ireland, but less boisterously.

Edward de Souza is suave and elegant, perhaps strangely so, as the roaring, dominating, whiskey-drinking actor-manager McMaster; and full of glee and rustic williness as Wellard, who guided with brusque affection and sharp perspicacity Pinter's sometimes uncertain notions of how to deal with deep-thinking and malevolent bowlers bent on bringing disaster on him or the wicket. De Souza shows us what Pinter thinks McMaster could do with Othello; how he yearned after Lear, and doubted his capacity; the tremendous confidence and artful delay with which round about midnight he quietened an audience of 2,000 drunks in Limerick, and even, in the process, sobered them up; just as he displays the modesty, the courage, and the idiosyncratic integrity of Arthur Wellard.

But the main importance of the performance, charming though it is in its own right, is the introduction that it gives us to a second Pinter. For there are, it seems, two Pinters. There is the Pinter with whom we are already familiar, the man who writes plays, *Players* shows that there is another Pinter, a man who has friends that (his own words) he remembers fondly. Now the fascinating thing is that the creatures the first Pinter creates are not in the least like the people that the second Pinter knows. But there is one thing common to both. Life (sometimes inadvertently) sets traps for them; menaces them; in an occasion rather frightening. The creatures of the first Pinter, the playwright, are baffled and defeated by these threats. They vanish to unfindable destinations, as in *The Birthday Party*; or pass out whimpering, as in *The Caretaker*, into a waste world; or even, as in *No Man's Land*, cannot discover the exit to a very commonplace street. They are terrified men, and they pay the penalty of terror.

Not so the second Pinter's friends. In their profession, at least, nothing seems to have daunted them. When he was over seventy Wellard would stand up in a bad light to fast bowling without flinching. Playing against Larwood in the latter a prime he admitted, when pressed by Pinter, that "He was a bit quick". His friends were equally unperceptive. The night before a match in Madras, Joe Hardstaff (Notts) sat up till five in the morning drinking glass for glass with the local Maharajah. At five o'clock Hardstaff fell under the table, and was put to bed insensible. That morning he went out to bat before lunch, batted for five hours, hit twenty-four fours, and made 213.

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## Letters

parallel theme is Tomlinson's own poetry, which is why his Clark Lectures are so important in their bearing on the evolution that has taken place in his verse of the last thirty years. Eliot's incomprehension as reviewer doesn't alter that. It only emphasizes the more how much simple clarifying is needed in order to see Tomlinson straight.

RICHARD SWIGG  
Department of English, University of Keele, Keele, Staffordshire

## A Herbert Sonnet

Dr. W. R. Inge (Letters, October 21), giving the text of a sonnet by William, Lord Herbert (first published thirty years after his death), suggests that it is perhaps an account of Herbert's first meeting with the woman of the Sonnets. It may well be so, but the date and the occasion do require discussion.

In the first place, the sonnet was written to give a version of what had happened, not necessarily a true version, any more than Sonnet 145 is a true account of how Anne Hathaway had come to accept Shakespeare's hand (the reality was perhaps a shot-gun wedding). In either case context and audience are relevant. For Sonnet 145 the wedding guests may seem an appropriate audience, but for Herbert's sonnet (the most suitable ear was surely Shakespeare's own). If Herbert had been led to believe by one group of sonnets that the woman was Shakespeare's mistress and had

been reproached in another group for leaping into his seat, his account of his visit to her may not have been quite true.

Second, if he did not lose his virginity to that woman, is there any evidence that he did not keep it till his affair with Mary Fitton, which began at his cousin's wedding on June 16, 1600, and ended with her pregnancy and his arrest?

Third, 1595 is unlikely. Herbert had certainly come up to London aged fifteen-and-a-half for about a month at the end of October 1595 with his father, the Earl, and Hugh Sandford, the family secretary-tutor, to become engaged to the Lord Chamberlain's granddaughter. We know from a letter of early December that he had refused to go through with the engagement and had returned with his father to Wilton. He had come up a second time, with his mother and, probably, Sandford again, for a month in mid-July 1597 to become engaged to Lord Burleigh's granddaughter (this engagement lasted till mid-October) and to be introduced at Court by Sir Robert Cecil. But on each occasion he would have been closely supervised; in view of the purpose of his visit and the importance of his marriage to his parents' plans; they were ensuring the integrity of their estates against his lengthy wardship (likely because of his father's recurrent illness). Only from the end of March 1598 did Herbert live continuously in London; in the family mansion; true, his uncle and family also resided in a suite of rooms there from the end of March for some months; but Herbert was not engaged and had begun to attend the

Court, so he would have been free to make such a visit as his sonnet describes.

For reasons too many to give here (they are in my edition of the Sonnets, *New Poems by Shakespeare*, Herbert Press, 1981) I have put the first meeting between Herbert and the woman of the Sonnets at the end of May 1598. A little extra confirmation comes from his unexpected return to Wilton in June. His father's letter of June 18 to Cecil as the Queen's Secretary, excusing his son's absence from the Court on the ground of illness from which he had not yet recovered, lets us suppose that Herbert's long ride home from London had been undertaken because of psychosomatic symptoms, to which a young man may be prone after his first heterosexual encounter. So perhaps he wrote his sonnet in that June at the age of eighteen.

J. H. PADEL  
The Manor Farm House, Hinton Waldrist, Oxon.

## 'Rienzi'

Sir, — John Deathridge's letter (October 21) about *Rienzi* isn't very convincing. I suppose I should have checked Winifred Wagner's statement to me that she had given the score of the work to Hitler; but whether it was she or a group of industrialists doesn't seem to make much odds.

*Rienzi* is long-suffering, whereas Hitler didn't ever appear to be. Though the Berlin Olympics may not have created the impression

of Hitler as a "war-mongering ogre", they were certainly intended, along with Riefenstahl's film of them, to promote the idea of Aryan supremacy, in which respect, as is well known, they mirrored to the Führer's rage. Rienzi's destruction of his enemies is no more similar to the behaviour of modern totalitarian rulers than that of any other ruler surrounded by would-be assassins; nor is his justification of the justifications normally advanced for destroying enemies of the state.

I have heard *Rienzi* — all of it — many times, though not one hundred, which Deathridge suggests as a punishment for my dismissal of it. But I wonder whether each time he hears it he isn't afflicted by any doubts as to whether his time could be better spent listening to *Der fliegende Holländer*, not to mention *Tristan*. Whenever one does something, it's worth remembering that one's not doing all the other things one might have done.

MICHAEL TANNER  
Corpus Christi College, Cambridge

Celia Bertin's *Marie Bonaparte: A Life*, of which the American edition was reviewed in the TLS, May 6, by Paul Roazen, has now been published in the UK by Quartet (£14.95, 07053 2399 0).

Correction: TLS Crossword No 14  
The clue to 25 across should read: "Ukrainian novel Russian nest".

# COMMENTARY

## The periodicals, 6: Poetry Review

Neil Corcoran

MICK INLAH and TRACEY WARR (Editors)  
Poetry Review Volume 73, Number 3  
Subscription £8, libraries, £11.

When Andrew Motion succeeded Roger Garfield as editor of the *Poetry Review* in 1982, the journal of the Poetry Society grew in size and acquired better-quality paper and illustrations. At the same time, its elusively eclectic character developed a slight Oxford-metropolitan accent. Motion has now been succeeded by two new editors, Mick Inlah and Tracey Warr; but the current issue looks very much as the journal has for the last couple of years. (Those who have known *Poetry Review* for some time will remember its weird oscillations of taste in the late 1960s and early 1970s.) There are poems, some feature articles, an informative news section, a correspondence column, and a general reviews section, which contains an enlightening piece on Motion and Paulin by Claude Dawson and a judicious assessment of Faber's new calendar series by Blake Morrison.

If a poetry review is to be judged by the quality of its poetry, the safe selection policy of *Poetry Review* is paying dividends: there are only one or two duds in the entire issue. But this is predictable enough in a journal which contains only work by well-established names (Mick Inlah, Sweetman, Redgrove), or by new-

comers whose first volumes are due soon from prestigious presses (Philip Gross and Selima Hill), or by the 1983 Gregory Award winners.

The only surprise of this issue, then, is just how good the best is. John Fuller's "Wednesday" starts out as an apparently unassuming piece about the death of his pet rabbit but, skilfully avoiding coyness, it builds into a fine poem about the ways we accommodate death in "our myth of perpetual contentment". Craig Raine's "Officer and Laughing Girl", like Aeneas Stevenson's "The Blue Pool", benefits from the journal's policy of illustrations: it helps to see the Augustus John which is Stevenson's starting-point, and the Vermeer and Picasso which are Raine's. In the latter case, the reproductions have a particular point since the poem is actually about reproductions rather than original paintings.

The feature articles seem to me less assured. As editor, Motion encouraged autobiographical reminiscence, and there were informative pieces by Charles Causley, Aeneas Stevenson, Douglas Dunn and Anne Ridler. Motion's own autobiographical piece, "Skating", accompanied by a sheet of photographs, is about his relationship ("love-affair", perhaps) with his mother. The intensity of the feeling described here, and the deep suffering caused by his mother's accident and coma — the material which also lies behind the sequence "Adversaries" from *The Pleasure Steepers* — make it difficult to criticize this piece. But it

seems to me that these matters have not yet reached a point of sufficient resolution to be adequately articulated in casual reminiscence. As a result, Motion finds it difficult to strike a proper tone: he can occasionally sound valiant ("It was so marvelous to be admired", sexually, by other boys at school) and precious: when his mother undresses "ostentatiously" in front of him, he finds it "delicious and shocking"; he can remember looking away from her to a mad ballet of flies around the lampshade. I want to look away too: not because the thing itself is embarrassing, but because it is embarrassing to watch someone making a phrase out of it. That "mad ballet" has a showiness surprising from the author of the mutedly harrowing "Adversaries".

James Fenton's "Manifesto Against Manifestoes" is a collection of aperçus, musings and queries on the State of the Craft. It is witty and urbane and genuinely informative about the new "narrative" poetry, or what Fenton thinks that might be. But it is a little irritating in its knowledge. Editors are referred to periphrastically, as are his own poems; and he makes much play of Craig Raine's comparison of his wife to a tomato without telling us where to find it. (I have myself discovered quite casually that the comparison was made in a *Sunday Times* article some years ago.) This mild waff of the cliché is something that *Poetry Review* can do without. It is, otherwise, an immensely readable and enjoyable journal.



# COMMENTARY

## Missionary positions

Geoffrey Wheatcroft

NICHOLAS WRIGHT  
The Custom of the Country  
The Pit, Barbican

The Custom of the Country was written around 1620 by Fletcher and Massinger, based on Cervantes's *Persiles y Sigismunda*; after a later revival Pepys called it "fully the worst play that ever I saw". The Jacobean play has been adapted in turn by Nicholas Wright who moves the setting from Lisbon to southern Africa in the 1890s. The custom of the title in each case is the *ius primae noctis*. An English missionary (Christopher Guard) in Zambesia, soon to be Rhodesia, has fallen in love with an African girl, Tendai (Josette Simon), and plans to marry her. Her feudal lord demands his customary right and, as in the earlier play, the couple flee.

From the second scene onwards we are in or near Johannesburg, the burgeoning gold-refectory. Tendai falls in with Daisy Bone, a brothel-keeper (Sinead Cusack). Daisy is having a casual fling with a young Boer (Tom Mannon) whose mother, Henrietta van Es (Sara Kestelman), owns a gold-bearing property. Living in Daisy's house is Lazarus, a Jewish scholar and her former lover. There arrive also the missionary's brother and Dr Jameson. The rest of the plot, leading to murder and resurrection, seduction and suicide pact, defies summary.

The striking set by Ralph Koltai is dominated by two great rippled domes representing—what? The kopjes of the veld? Female sexuality, central to the play? The solar toposes of Imperialism? In whatever case, these mighty mounds are out of place once the action moves and stays indoors. More to the point are two upstage doors, one at ground level, one up a flight of stairs and leading to a balcony. Through these and two other entrances the cast

enter and depart with dizzying rapidity.

That gives a clue: at any given moment it is necessary that one character does not know that another is nearby and about to come through the door. Wright calls his play a "romantic comedy": sex-farce would be nearer the mark, though if it had been put on at the Whitehall in the old days it would not have had anything like so strong a cast. The three women are especially memorable, even if one sometimes feels that in the unintentionally patronizing way the modern theatre has with black actresses Miss Simon is expected merely to look stunning (which she does) rather than actually do anything. Miss Cusack is affecting as the tart with the heart of Rand crusaders. (Harvey in the old *Oxford Companion to English Literature* sighs that the Fletcher and Massinger play is "disfigured by the ineptness of some of its scenes"; it's as well that he didn't hear some of Miss Cusack's lines.) And Miss Kestelman as the Boeress widow is formidable, even if her usually accurate Afrikaner accent sometimes swerves towards Johannesburg-Jewish, a different thing.

But then, if the play had been written for the Whitehall it would not have been so laden with social and political significance. South Africa as the goldfields were beginning to transform it was an extraordinary place and it should be a gift to the writer. Violence and bawdry are authentic to the mining camp, but otherwise there is almost no feeling for time and place. The dialogue is relentlessly prochronistic, full of modern slang and idiom.

In many ways the play provides a sprightly and enjoyable evening. But although Ortonesque black comedy and gross farce can be an apt form of commentary on South Africa as, for example, in Tom Sharpe's South African novels, it is hard to see here why Johannesburg 1890 has been chosen rather than any other place and time.

## Writings and reasonings

Peter Kemp

Bookmark  
BBC 2  
Book Four  
Channel 4

"Now we've reached the climax of the evening, when literature comes face to face with stardust", breathed Simon Winchester as *Bookmark*'s coverage of the Booker Prize ceremony neared its culmination. For most of the programme, though, literature had been coming face to face with moonshine. As *Kalaido* scope's efficiently superior commentary on the event later pointed out, "a media jammer" had been in full, vacuum state.

Given the crassness of last year's television treatment of the Booker Prize—with its memorable high-spot of a heavily-made-up Derek Jacobi intoning extracts from short-listed books at a lecture in front of a stained-glass window—it might have been thought that only improvement was possible. *Bookmark* showed this wasn't so—largely by giving disastrous scope to Selina Scott. Let loose among the literati in Stationers' Hall, she performed a dizzying sequence of *faux pas*. Coming to grief whenever she attempted serious questioning—as in her strange enquiries as to "how valid it is" for a novelist to write about events he hasn't personally experienced—she increasingly fell back on a kind of off-the-rails rallery: accosting one of the short-listed writers with the cry, "Well, fancy meeting you here, Malcolm Bradbury!" or chaffing Cape's Tom Maschler with "How much lobbying did you do to make sure that your writer got nominated?" At least it was to be supposed that the latter query was intended as a joke. Sometimes, assumptions slipped out from under the arch manner suggesting a rather unusual concept of the way things might be done: "Did you read them all?" a judge was asked of the books submitted for the prize. To the end, she maintained her lack of control: informing viewers, after the prize had gone to J.M. Coetzee's *The Life and Times of Michael K*, that the winner was "The Life and Times of Michael J"; starting to interview Angela Carter—"Madam, can I ask you what you think of the choice of the winner?"—without realizing she was one of the judges who had made that choice.

Amid this flummery, the writers emerged extremely creditably—even though subjected to a double ordeal, interview by *Bookmark* being

supplemented with garishly dramatized extracts from their books. The only novelist not actually present, it transpired, was the winner, Coetzee. And his reluctance to expose himself to bright lights and dim questions obviously established him in the presenters' minds as a reclusive freak. "Coetzee is South African and somewhat shy", Selina Scott kindly explained. "As we've said before, he's . . . rather shy", Winchester heavily confirmed. (His novel was excerpted in the *TLS* of September 16, and reviewed by D. J. Enright on September 20.)

From the judges, little was heard—except for what emerged in an interview with Fay Weldon ("the lady with a £10,000 secret in her head"). Obligingly, she disclosed that the Booker judges were looking for "the book best fitted to win the Booker Prize"—adding enigmatically that this meant "not quite . . . the best book". This cryptic qualification was never elucidated. And clearly, there's something about the Booker Prize that promotes obscurity. Earlier in the week, on *Book Four*'s nicely handled survey of the shortlist, Martin Amis mystifyingly observed that, though he'd disliked Bradbury's novel when reviewing it, "looking at it again in the context of the Booker, I would rate it much higher". Exactly how "the context of the shortlist" could alter a book's merits wasn't evident. And Amis's subsequent remarks—as that Bradbury "isn't quite up to writing a novel about the world we live in"—supplied neither clarification nor any reason for taking the novel very seriously.

*Book Four* provided plenty of helpfully marshalled material about the Booker Prize, though. And, in Margaret Forster, it gave some insight into the thought-processes of a recent judge. These didn't always seem quite to add up: she had enjoyed Coetzee's novel "till two-thirds of the way through" because "about half-way" it went wrong; she "disliked that intensely" but thought it "a wonderful book". Combined with some resounding and unsorted-out collisions of opinion—she found Amis Mason's book "extremely difficult to read", Michael Holroyd "found it very easy to read", she praised Coetzee's "elegant prose", Martin Amis complained of its "wilted clichés"—this all went to suggest that the really riveting aspect of the Booker procedures is the allowed access to would-be judges' deliberations. Denied this, *Book Four* made a praiseworthy effort to explore the writings and reasonings genuine to the prize, while *Bookmark* settled for sturting at the cash and cachet.

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

### Competition No 147

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than November 25. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct—in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 147" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on December 2.

1. A school is the cavern of fear and sorrow; the nobility of the captive youths is chained to a book and a desk; an inflexible master commands their attention, which every moment is impatient to escape; they labour like the soldiers of Persia under the scourge, and their education is nearly finished before they can apprehend the sense or utility of the harsh lessons which they are forced to repeat.

2. The practice of barring-out was a savage licence, practised in many schools to the end of the last century; by which the boys, when the periodical vacation drew near, growing impatient at the approach of liberty, some days before the time of regular recess took possession of the school.

3. My first scheme, you know, sir, was to be usher to an academy and asked his advice on the affair. Our cousin received the proposal with a true sardonic grin. "Aye," cried he, "this

is indeed a very pretty career that has been clinched out for you. I have been an usher at a boarding-school myself; and may I die by an onodine necklacc, but I had rather be an under-turnkey in Newgate."

### Competition No 143

Winner: Ian Hislop

Answers:  
1. I never heard anyone who fulfilled my ideal of an Orator—Grattan would have been nearer it, but for his Harlequin delivery—Pitt I never heard—Fox but once—and then he struck me as a debater—which seems to me as different from an Orator as an Improvisatore or a versifier from a poet.

Lord Byron, *Dejected Thoughts*, October 1821.

2. In those days, and indeed for many years, I was unable to say anything (except in a rejoinder) that I had not written out and committed to memory beforehand. I had never had the practice which comes to young men at the University of speaking in small debating societies impromptu upon all sorts of subjects. Winston Churchill, *My Early Life*, chapter 29.

3. As he spoke, a glowing clarity pierced the clouds and the story ended in a blaze of sunshine . . . He was always primarily a debater; his perorations might rise to the tremendous emotional climax, but the argument always came from the intellect. Michael Foot, "Aneurin Bevan"

## Visionary might-have-beens

David Watkin

HOWARD COLVIN  
*Unbuilt Oxford*  
Oxford University Press. £20 (paperback),  
198pp. Yale University Press. £20 (paperback),  
£1.95.  
0300 030169

The unimpeachable scholarship of an author such as Howard Colvin applied to one of the most beautiful cities in Europe could not fail to produce a memorable volume. A professional medieval historian, Colvin helped to create architectural history as an academic discipline in this country in the mid-twentieth century by applying to it the historical technique of rigorous reliance on documentary sources. He demonstrated the success of this approach in his monumental *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, first published in 1954, where he overthrew many long established attributions and "invented" dozens of new architects. The other principal change in the recent fortunes of architectural history is associated with the name of Mark Girouard, who showed how architectural history could be enlivened by emphasis on the personalities and styles of living patrons. The prospect of mass sales to a wider audience justified the production of glossy illustrated books of which an attractive recent example has been Clive Aslet's *The Last Country Houses* (Yale, 1982). *Unbuilt Oxford*, also published by Yale, looks like a book of this kind. Lavishly illustrated, with virtually no footnotes, it does not look like a book by Colvin. Indeed, he points out that it "is not a systematic study . . . and makes no claim to completeness".

It is naive the less a triumph in which the learned lexicographer, without lowering his standards of scholarship, can enjoy himself by describing, for example, Baker's Rhodes House as "like a dinner jacket made of Harris Tweed"; the perfect description of its odd combination of a Pantheon portico with Cotswold stone rubble walls. Commenting on the tendency of dons to procrastinate, he can quote the description of Oxford as "a hotbed of odd feet", and relating the story of the fight against the Zoology Tower in the 1960s he can write: "the building that the Vice-Chancellor optimistically described as likely to bring 'in touch of San Gimignano' into the Oxford skyline, seemed to others 'less like San Gimignano set down in the Science Area than like the new Engineering Laboratory set down in San Gimignano'".

It is a curiosity that architecture, ostensibly the most tangible and concrete of the arts, can be appreciated in unbuilt as well as in built designs. The possibilities for appreciating unbuilt architecture were heightened by the invention of the perspective architectural drawing as part of the Picturesque movement in the eighteenth century. Even before this, Bramante's unexecuted design for St Peter's was one of the most important designs in Renaissance architecture. Bernini's unexecuted Louvre project, Wren's Great Model design for St Paul's, and Lutyens's design for Llanrhuddoch Cathedral manage to have a powerful resonance which enhances their architects' reputation now as in their lifetime, almost as much as if they had actually been built. It is this which makes it possible for a serious and enlightening book to be written with the title *Unbuilt Oxford*, whereas a book called *Unwritten Oxford* sounds like something out of Beethoven.

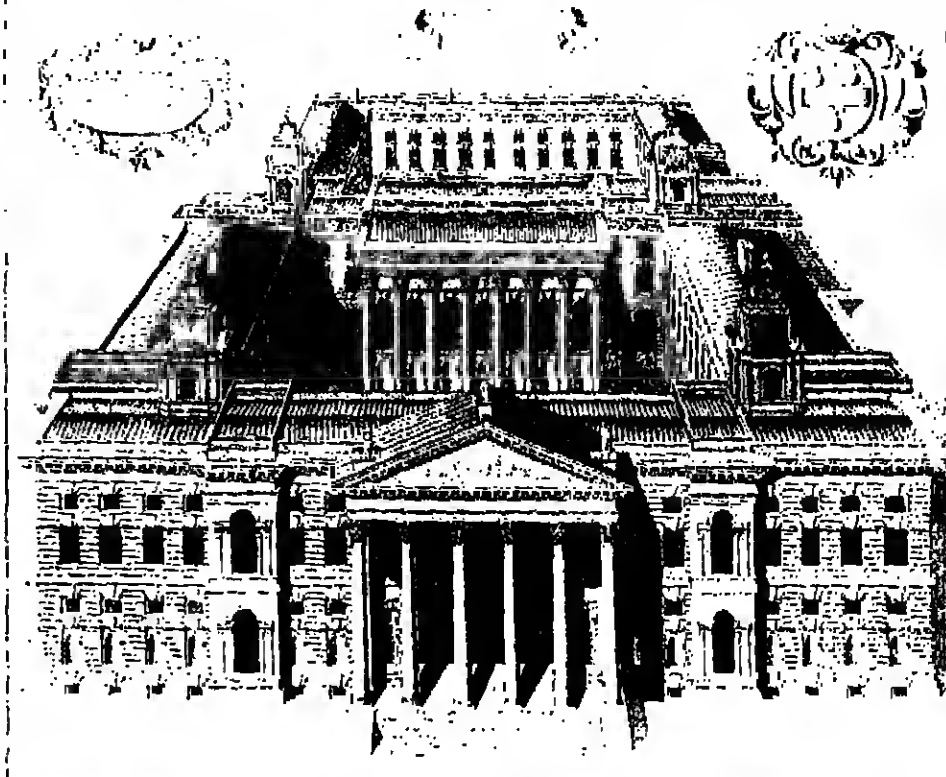
Colvin describes Oxford in his preface as a graveyard of rejected designs and his book as "a series of case studies in the academic patronage of architecture". His conclusions are, perhaps surprisingly, that "though Dons may live in ivory towers, they do not often build the University of speaking in small debating societies impromptu upon all sorts of subjects. Winston Churchill, *My Early Life*, chapter 29.

As he spoke, a glowing clarity pierced the clouds and the story ended in a blaze of sunshine . . . He was always primarily a debater; his perorations might rise to the tremendous emotional climax, but the argument always came from the intellect. Michael Foot, "Aneurin Bevan"

have been many libraries in which the number of books housed is so small in proportion to the total cubic area". One such was the handsome School Library at Eton by L. K. Hall of 1906. Partly inspired by the Radcliffe Camera, it turned out to be more successful as a Memorial to the South African War than as a library. Colvin begins his book with a very short

which makes the title, *Unbuilt Oxford*, not always strictly accurate.

A whole chapter is devoted to the extraordinary story of "Indecision at Magdalen", where between 1720 and 1844 as many as twenty architects produced designs for modernizing, extending or replacing the medieval college. One of the most surprising of these is the



Nicholas Hawksmoor's design of about 1720 for Brasenose College, as illustrated in Williams's *Oxonia Depleta*. The tall rectangular structure with giant pilasters, at the centre of the front quadrangle, is the chapel, and the hall lies immediately behind it. This was to be the elevation to the High Street. The design is reproduced from the book reviewed here.

chapter on medieval Oxford of which the highlight is a conjectural drawing by Daphne Hart of Cardinal College as Wolsey envisaged it. No medieval plans survive in Oxford which are comparable to the documents relating to Henry VI's college at Cambridge. In the seventeenth century the impact of the Reformation on religious practices and of the Renaissance on intellectual thought, "might have been expected to produce a new type of college: classical in style and recognizably Anglican in its provision for religious worship". In fact, as is well known, Oxford remained content to echo medieval forms, with the result that "Not a single building by Inigo Jones or his pupil John Webb was to be found in Oxford". Colvin explains this as a consequence of the medieval distinction between the liberal and mechanical arts: "Architecture, as a mechanical art, did not form part of the neoclassical curriculum". It took the Grand Tour consciousness of the eighteenth century to make knowledge of classical architecture part of the equipment of dons and gentlemen. An exception is afforded by the remarkable classical plan for University College of about 1634 which Colvin reproduces in a modern, redrawn version. He points to a contrast between Oxford and Cambridge in the sixteenth century as represented in the person of Dr Caius (1510-73) who, more informed about architecture than any Oxford don of his generation, erected three gateways at Caius College which are striking architectural expressions of humanist concepts.

The eighteenth century provides Colvin with the richest feast in his book. There are Baroque and Palladian schemes by the score: Aldrich for All Souls and Christ Church; Tallman for All Souls; and, above all, Hawksmoor for All Souls, Queen's, Brasenose, Worcester, the Radcliffe Camera, and for transforming Oxford into a Raman city with a Forum University. The eighteenth century was a time of great architectural activity in Oxford, and it is a pity that the book, which is a masterpiece of scholarship, does not contain more of the plans and drawings of the period. The book is one of the most striking. This Gibbs's Norman-style, Colvin finds too visionary to be practicable. The Science Area, on the other hand, he rightly condemns as a triumph of the practical over the visionary, while he finds the plan of Gibbs's splendid Radcliffe Camera that it is one of the few instances in Oxford of the victory of the visionary over the practical. He suggests that there "cannot

chapter on medieval Oxford of which the highlight is a conjectural drawing by Daphne Hart of Cardinal College as Wolsey envisaged it. No medieval plans survive in Oxford which are comparable to the documents relating to Henry VI's college at Cambridge. In the seventeenth century the impact of the Reformation on religious practices and of the Renaissance on intellectual thought, "might have been expected to produce a new type of college: classical in style and recognizably Anglican in its provision for religious worship". In fact, as is well known, Oxford remained content to echo medieval forms, with the result that "Not a single building by Inigo Jones or his pupil John Webb was to be found in Oxford". Colvin explains this as a consequence of the medieval distinction between the liberal and mechanical arts: "Architecture, as a mechanical art, did not form part of the neoclassical curriculum". It took the Grand Tour consciousness of the eighteenth century to make knowledge of classical architecture part of the equipment of dons and gentlemen. An exception is afforded by the remarkable classical plan for University College of about 1634 which Colvin reproduces in a modern, redrawn version. He points to a contrast between Oxford and Cambridge in the sixteenth century as represented in the person of Dr Caius (1510-73) who, more informed about architecture than any Oxford don of his generation, erected three gateways at Caius College which are striking architectural expressions of humanist concepts.

Nash's Gothic fantasia for Magdalen reappeared in different guise in Pugin's project of 1843 for rebuilding Balliol. Colvin appropriately devotes a whole chapter to this, explaining how Pugin saw "the planning of a college as the first step in a crusade to put the clock back to an idealised medieval past in which dons taught Catholic doctrines in rooms with oriel windows and undergraduates slept in canopied beds with prie-dieu [sic] by their side and improving texts round their walls".

The nineteenth century is rich with unexecuted projects for Christ Church by Bodley, Jackson and Sir Gilbert Scott; for the Extension Schools by J. O. Scott and Champneys; and for Merton and Trinity by Jackson. It is Jackson who is the hero of this chapter for "From the 1870s until the First World War Jackson was almost continually employed in Oxford". His neo-Jacobean work was generally civilized and not inappropriate to its setting, so that Oxford was more fortunate in this period than Cambridge.

The last chapter, "Oxford and the Modern Movement", was obviously the most difficult

to write for there are as yet no generally accepted criteria by which to judge modern buildings. Most educated people will now share the value judgments which Colvin makes about buildings up to the First World War, but controversy still rages about buildings from that period to the present day. Thus some readers will be surprised to find Colvin regretting the failure to execute at Balliol the "crisp and elegant" hall range in the style of Le Corbusier which Lubetkin's pupils, Samuel and Harding, proposed for Broad Street in 1936. However, he opposes the similarly breath-taking effrontery of the buildings Maxwell Fry proposed for All Souls in 1937. On the other hand, he welcomes the no less aggressive products of the swinging 'sixties by architects like Dowson, Powell and Moya, Ahrends, Burton and Koralek. The unexpected heart of this chapter is the entertaining account of the rise and fall of Austen Harrison's extensive scheme of 1938 for Nuffield College in an imaginative if austere style which Colvin is pleased to describe as "Sicilian-Norman". When it was presented to Lord Nuffield in the form of "a model made unprepossessingly of clay, without any of those little artifices by which modern architects beguile their clients", he rejected it uncompromisingly. Content to adapt himself to Nuffield's wish for "something on the lines of Cotswold domestic architecture", Harrison produced the designs which, following further emasculation in 1949, were executed in the 1950s.

Colvin's discussion of the monstrous Zoology Tower, proposed in 1961 at the behest of the late Professor Pringle by Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, is the occasion of the only lacuna in the book: the omission from the bibliography of *The Letters of Mercurius* (1970). In his account of the successful battle against the building, Mercurius Oxoniensis described it as "of prodigious height, dwarfing all other towers, but slender, like a gignietic stone beanstalk, with twenty-nine storeys, and each storey packed with animals, superimposed after their kind, as moles in the basement, bats in the belfry . . ."

This study is especially valuable in view of the fact that the buildings of Oxford have not been subjected to the detailed archival investigation of the kind which is at the core of Willis and Clark's monumental *Architectural History of the University of Cambridge* (1886). *Unbuilt Oxford* is a book which everyone will want to have on their shelves who loves architecture and who loves Oxford; and is there a civilized person who does not?

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# In reasonable doubt

T. L. S. Sprigge

MAX BLACK  
The Prevalence of Humbug and other essays  
187pp. Cornell University Press. £14.50.  
0 8014 15144

There is a kind of no longer dominant analytic philosophy whose main message is: "Don't get too excited about it!" Its mission is to show that certain dramatic claims turn on conceptual confusions and that things are just as we ordinarily think them (when working in low mental gear, as an opponent might say). Max Black has long been a skilled and illuminating practitioner of an analytic philosophy which includes but goes beyond this approach. The present volume contains essays (based mainly on talks) intended for the general reader, in which a variety of issues about rationality that tend to generate excitement are dealt with in this sober way. There are four parts, each including two essays: "Rational and Reasonable", "Aspects of Science", "Beyond Rationality", "Some Puzzles".

The first essay asks "Why should I be rational?" For Black's taste, the very common view that it would beg the question to offer reasons for being reasonable (for basing one's beliefs and actions on reasons) plays too much into the hands of the relativists, for whom reason is optional. It is, he thinks, ill grounded, since the person who, theoretically, doubts the desirability of being reasonable may recognize individual good reasons, and it is worth offering him one for being reasonable. This will conform to canons of reasonableness but will not beg the question by using these as premisses. Black's own proffered reason is that reason in

the full sense is a development of a minimal form of, or analogue to, rational inference found in animals, and is thus the specifically human form of a tool which any animal must use if it is to survive. For Black, any animal that uses perceptual signs for objects out of view which might threaten danger or promise benefit is employing this analogue of reason. Surprisingly, he does not contrast instinctive and learnt interpretation of signs. His answer to irrationalism would have been clearer if he had explained why.

In the second part, the two essays deal respectively with scientific objectivity and scientific neutrality. Sensible reasons are given for holding that science is a search, not hopeless, for truth and not, as some maintain today, the construction simply of one among many possible mythologies to live by. What seems a little unsatisfactory here is an apparent association in Black's mind of the view that science is concerned with genuine truth with the view that the scientific truth about nature is the only truth about it. One may agree with him in rejecting the view that, because it depicts a nature which is "dead, alien and purely functional" (Rozak) science is not properly true, while holding that such critics of science may be right if they are maintaining that a scientific account of nature, from which all value predicates are purged, is not the whole accessible truth about it, not "all that we have with which to get a grip on reality". In the second essay, "Is Scientific Neutrality a Myth?", the question of whether scientific propositions are value-free is distinguished from the question whether science as an activity should be conducted in a moral vacuum, and it is shown that an affirmative answer to the first question would be no ground for a similar answer to the second. But

Black goes further, and contends that scientific research itself (though not the nature it reveals), especially as a team activity funded by interested parties, involves values to such an extent that the research workers' impact on human life cannot be hived off from their scientific work proper as something they do as mere citizens.

The third part opens with an essay on "Inhumaneness" and is concerned with what it is to "act towards another human being as befits a human being". It lies, Black contends, in paying attention to him as something that matters in its own right, and having some power to sympathize with his "private world" and respecting his right to have it. Black shows himself a thorough humanist both in a good sense and in what some may think a less good sense, for he gives at least the impression that the human world is the sole locus of value. He protests (despite essay one) against all views of the kind "Man is just an animal that has such-and-such" but does not consider the attempts to place man more squarely in nature of the religious or humanist traditions, which are not thus belittling. The following, title essay seeks to define and put us on our guard against

## Bridging the gap

David Papineau

SOLLACE MITCHELL and MICHAEL ROSEN (Editors)  
The Need for Interpretation: Contemporary Conceptions of the Philosopher's Task  
182pp. Athlone Press. £14.  
0 855 11224 8

The Need for Interpretation is a collection of essays united by the conviction that there is more in philosophy than is dreamed of in Oxford University. The contributors, all alumni of a maverick discussion group in Oxford, share a background in English-speaking philosophy, but find their tradition narrow by comparison with other philosophical approaches. Or, as the editors put it, the contributors "embrace the methods but not the aims of analytic philosophy, and the aims but not the methods of continental philosophy".

The division between analytic and Continental philosophy is a difficult thing to get hold of. At one level it is not clear why there should be a division at all. English-speaking and Continental (especially French) philosophers ask similar general questions about mind, language and reality, and indeed at a general level they tend to give similar answers – thus, for instance, a dominant concern in both camps over the past few decades has been to remove the conscious subject from the centre of the philosophical stage. But as soon as we come down to any level of detail we seem to be faced with two entirely different enterprises. Even if they start with similar concerns, both sides end up feeling that the other is by-passing all the important issues and succumbing to stylistic self-indulgence. But why they should always find themselves talking past each other remains a puzzle. Why should similar starting-points have led to phenomenology on one side of the Channel and to phenomenism over here, to their having Jacques Derrida and our having Donald Davidson? There seems no good response except to recognize that the demands of common rationality (if there are any) stand for nothing against the brute power of divergent tradition.

This volume illustrates some of the difficulties involved in trying to bridge the gap. For a start, only two of the pieces engage directly with recent developments in Continental thinking. Sollace Mitchell discusses post-structuralism in the person of Derrida. He focuses on the elimination of the concept of intention from the understanding of texts, and argues that Derrida, in assimilating all meaning to metaphor, simply overlooks the kind of literal or "first-order" meaning where some notion of intention is ultimately inescapable. This is a considered, and not unsympathetic, piece. But reassuring as the conclusions may be to analytic readers more committed enthusiasts will no doubt feel that the real thrust of Derrida's thinking is obscured if we view him through the grid of analytic philosophy of language. The

humbug. Black does not discuss the risk that analytic philosophers run of seeing more humbug around them than there is, but I would not defend any of the targets he aims at here.

Part Four contains essays dealing with the rationality of casting one's vote in an election when the result is normally pre-determined, and with a problem about the prediction of choice called Newcomb's puzzle. Black, doubtless rightly, characterizes the situation supposed to generate the latter as so baffling that the rational thing would always be to deem oneself not in it, but his self-interest venter weighing up his precise contribution to the election result seems to me too thin an abstraction to cast much light on what anyone is up to in the polling-booth.

These essays are pleasant reading, but almost too reasonable, sometimes bearing out Black's own suggestion that reasonableness is "a somewhat humdrum, pedestrian virtue". Perhaps their main weakness is that the opponents against whom Black here defends his own commitments are hardly the most serious alternatives to his kind of rationality, humanism, and confidently common-sense philosophy.

other piece dealing directly with Continental developments is Michael Rosen's article on Critical Theory. Rosen concentrates on Theodor Adorno and Jürgen Habermas, criticizing the former for being a materialist who still wants to eat his Hegelian cake, and the latter for not taking Wittgenstein's insights about rule-following sufficiently to heart. Again, while this is an admirably cogent piece of work, and while it is unlikely that anybody nowadays would want to defend Adorno against this kind of criticism, it is by no means clear that the most illuminating way to object to Habermas is to appeal to Wittgensteinian considerations about rules.

These Wittgensteinian considerations, as it happens, figure rather large in this collection. Two of the other articles are explicitly about aspects of Wittgenstein's thinking on rules and conceptual judgment. Christopher Leich writes on Wittgenstein and mathematics, and Theodore Schatzki on Wittgenstein and social science. These are interesting topics, and certainly worth discussing, but it is somewhat surprising to find them featuring so prominently in this volume. For, if there is such a thing as the analytic tradition, there can be little question that Wittgenstein is a fully fledged member of it. It is of course a measure of his greatness that he can be seen as subverting and changing this tradition. But this gives no cause for dissatisfaction with the analytic tradition – on the contrary, it is surely in the credit of the tradition that it can absorb such innovative influences. This issue of Wittgenstein's place within it is not without significance, for while Leich and Schatzki's essays are stimulating, they present distinctly idiosyncratic views of their subject matter, and they could only have been improved by some discussion of the increasingly sophisticated literature in this area.

Perhaps the most interesting piece in the collection is by Charles Taylor. Taylor is a rather more senior figure than the other contributors, and indeed, among currently active philosophers, probably the most successful at bridging the gap between the two traditions. It is noteworthy that he does not take as his topic some meta-issue relating to the distance between Continental and analytic thinking. Instead, he discusses one of the most lively areas in contemporary analytic philosophy, namely computer-influenced materialism about the mind, and explains why somebody of his philosophical inclinations will feel that the approach is quite unable to account for the point, or significance, of mental events. The materialists will no doubt find answers to the difficulties Taylor raises, but they are real difficulties, and Taylor at least succeeds in posing a serious challenge to the materialists' position. And perhaps he also succeeds in illustrating a more general moral: that to build bridges you need to construct them out of substantial philosophical argument. It's no good just shouting plaintively to the people on the other side.

## Unquestioned questions

Janet Morgan

RAYMOND WILLIAMS  
Towards 2000  
273pp. Chatto and Windus / Hogarth Press.  
1995.  
0 7012 2685 X

There is a particular kind of argument – fluent, well-intentioned, wonderfully straightforward and simple – on which it is almost impossible to get a grip. It somehow remains unconvincing, yet its defects are persistently, nudgingly elusive. *Towards 2000* is exasperating in just this way. A seamless garment of beguiling shades, it offers no one join at which to start unpicking the threads. You must take it entire, or not at all. It is, moreover, a grand, all-encompassing argument. No use objecting that in places it doesn't fit; it's a robe.

What Raymond Williams has done is to take the greater part of the essay, *Britain in the Sixties*, which he wrote in 1959, and by examining what has happened in the twenty years since then to test, not his propositions as to the sort of future we might hope for, but the usefulness of his methods at arriving at such predictions. If, he declares, his techniques prove with hindsight to have been intelligent, they may be applied to a study of where the next few decades may take us: "a prospective analysis is on the record... we can review and learn from it in the necessary work of a new prospective analysis".

The second part of *Towards 2000* accordingly expounds the main sections of *Britain in the Sixties*, concentrating on four themes: industrial society in Britain; contemporary British democracy; class and politics; and culture. A note on the book-jacket reminds us that when these views originally appeared, as part of the author's guidance for *The Long Revolution*, Richard Crossman hailed the work as "the first book to break through the thought barrier into a new epoch of Socialist ideas". Since, however, it is methodology that Professor Williams has invited us to inspect in his introductory section, let us for the moment keep to that.

As it happened, in that earlier essay the author did not make any song and dance of his subtle method; nor does he do so now as he looks back. But it is not too difficult to identify its components. There are four. In the first place, Williams pays much attention to the use and meaning of words: in the section on industrial society, for instance, he reflects on the popularity and significance of the term "consumer" and, in the relevant section, on the history of "class" as a social term". Second, he stresses on relationships rather than on aggregates: that is, on relations between different sorts of activity, between people and the circumstances in which they live, and relations between the themes he is himself discussing. Third, he emphasizes the importance of looking at trends, as in his section on class and politics (largely on historic movements in the Labour vote). Last, he supports his argument always by appeals to experience, often his own: "remember", goes a characteristic interpolation, "sitting with a group of small shopkeepers, who were trying to explain to me how you could never trust 'that class of people'..." "I remember watching in a backstreet fish and chip shop..."

These anecdotes are so endearing, Williams' speculations about trends and relations so interesting and his effort to explore contemporary vocabulary so admirable, on enterprising that it is hard to keep the point about methodology at the front of our minds (especially since this second part is much better written than the explanation of the author's intentions in part one). In so far as we can hang on to the analytic compass, however, we find that in the third part of the book, where the sorry state of Britain in the Eighties is examined, our analysis is as good as his word. The same instructions are used. Again language is unravelling, for example, the section on "post-industrial society" where there is a useful discussion of our understanding of the terms "employment", "skill" and "work". Less plausible is an account of the section on democracy of the "representative" and "participative". As before, relationships are emphasized, particularly those between industrial production and natural resources and between the rich and money. Trends, especial-

ly in the Labour vote, are once more inspected. And, as in *Britain in the Sixties*, we are invited to look not at mere theory (which the author tends, engagingly, to dismiss as "fantasy") but at what we know – what to the clear-eyed plainly counts, for instance, as "work" (including hard manual labour and caring for the young, old, sick or weak), at the mess we make of the globe, the effects of intervention, however benevolent our motives, on other peoples and other economies, and so on. There are further glimpses of the analyst himself on the job, as, for example, he looks on at a self-deluding competitive world: "I know that I have gone from reading the English newspapers on these familiar themes and then read for some weeks the French or the Italian or the German newspapers only to realise, beyond the differences of language, that the same analyses were being applied, the same remedies proposed, as if each were the only people in the world."

In this ultra-reasonable, systematic manner Raymond Williams has thought and now thinks again, or at least brings together the views of progressive people (to be accurate, he does not in fact call them that and they appear in various guises: radicals, intellectuals, the Left, etc) who subscribe to the conventional wisdom as to the state of Britain and the chances of redemption for its and the rest of the world's citizens. We are persuaded that the author is honest not just by his lined, craggy face, with tufts of hair sticking out over his ears, smiling tentatively from the back of the jacket, but by the disarming way he talks about himself – on procedures for taking decisions jointly, for instance: "I know from my own experience, in helping to work out such ways in my own job, some of the difficulties"; or in his strictures on the "limited perspectives and outdated assumptions" governing the labour movement: "very hard things to say: especially hard for someone who grew up in and was formed by the old labour institutions and perspectives; a contemporary of the present leaders of the industrial labour movement, from a working-class family like their own..."

Not only much of the author's style but many of his sentiments are sympathetic: his recommendations, for example, for more and more genuine consultation where and whenever decisions are to be taken, for greater sensitivity in dealings with other people, more honesty about attitudes to women, foreigners, children, in fact to members of any group, especially when it is perceived as a group, for more scrupulous care for the environment, for confidence to resist "technological determinism", so that machines may be seen as people's servants and not the other way about.

But as we move from methodology to the content of the author's analysis and prescriptions and particularly as we arrive at his more specific suggestions, the edifice becomes increasingly shaky and the ground of the argument less and less secure. There are awkward little screams at the point where he embarks on detailed recommendations: in the section on democracy, for example, where he offers fixed parliamentary terms, which actually tend to weaken an opposition's hand, and a second chamber based (as far as we can make it out) on professional and interest groups, "in which the democratic process would run... along different lines of relationship", which ignores the tendency of legislative bodies to divide on party political lines, however they have been constituted originally.

There is a fanciful proposal, in the section on culture in the original essay, for a Books Council, "representative on the one hand of publishers, booksellers and authors, on the other hand of Parliament [Parliament?], which would have the duty of ensuring the continued independence of publication, and at the same time the best possible distribution of books and periodicals overseas..." In the new chapter on "Culture and Technology" these ideas are brought up to date (after some excellent discussion of the difficulties of "public service" broadcasting in circumstances where ratings and profits are seen as all-important) with equally ill-thought-out proposals for "at least four new kinds of transmission service. First, an alternative film and video network, to be used by a variety of independent producers. Second, an exchange network, to be used between the existing television companies and

independent producers of different countries. Third, a library or booklist network, serviced by an electronic catalogue now owned or stored by a wide range of producer companies. Fourth, a reference and archive network, drawing on material now stored in various forms of public trust...", the first three to be financed by "systems of pay-as-you-view", in all their early stages. It all sounds fine, at least until one starts to wonder what it all means, let alone how this state of affairs is to be arrived at.

More worryingly, there are huge chasms, where the argument gives way completely. These are especially evident in the two later chapters where Williams outlines the strategy right-thinking persons should now seek to follow, "The Culture of Nations" and "The Analysis Extended". Suddenly, for instance, the reader who has happily trundled over the terrain of some fairly sensible, indeed familiar, remarks about the unworthiness of narrow nationalism, about different types of "bonding", the new international economic order, alternative technologies, and so on, fetches up on the edge of a crevasse such as this: "traditional Socialist programmes of planned production can then be steadily extended to programmes of planned and equitable foreign trade and investment, which are the only alternatives to the world capitalist system". The author has explained at length why he believes that capitalism is a disaster but he nowhere outlines how "traditional Socialist programmes of planned production" are to become any less of a disaster than they at present seem to be. The reader is left at something of a loss, particularly since the writer has warned him at the beginning of the book not to fall into the trap of maintaining that certain remedies should not be tried in the future because they have failed to succeed in the past.

It would be time-wasting to bother with arguments as windy, if well-meaning, as these, were it not for the fact that such liberties so frequently deter people from thinking for themselves. A sequence of sensible observations lulls the audience; real problems are outlined and attacked; solutions are then propounded which are half-baked, but which, because they are couched in familiar language, tend to be accepted uncritically. Take, in another example, Williams' chapter on "War:

The Last Enemy". A balanced discussion of the place of military technology in the "social order" is followed by pages of appallingly loose argument, including unsubstantiated assertions that, for instance, "deterrence" has become an ideology, that since the Neolithic and Bronze Ages "there has been a remarkable increase in death and destruction", that, as far as "surveillance" and "secrecy" are concerned, in "Western capitalist societies" there is "at least as much use of these controls, now aided by major technological developments of their own, against home-grown working-class and related political organisations" as "against actual and probable Soviet agents, or for national military security". From a "radical thinker" this is not good enough. Nor is it useful to make such statements as: "the distinction between strategy and ideology is particularly evident and it has been evident again, though in confused ways, in the complex actions in Iran and Afghanistan".

As for the author's five "most relevant and precise proposals" for "genuine multilateralism", they show a happy ignorance both of the terms and circumstances in which the nuclear freeze debate is being conducted, in the United Nations as elsewhere, and of the possibilities, as chilling outside "Western capitalist societies" as within them, of nuclear terrorism and nuclear blackmail.

It is all very well for Williams to urge us to assemble, in the title of his last chapter, "Resources for a Journey of Hope", and to discard narrow and insecure attitudes which might otherwise persuade us to cling only to the ways we know or, worse, to fall in with the opportunistic, calculating proponents of what he calls "Plan X", those who steer for a marginal competitive advantage, selfishly and consciously surviving hand-to-mouth, "devising and testing alternative scenarios of response, moving resources and standbys into position". If we are to be the intelligent, co-operative strategists he would like us to be, we will need more than an advanced course of Couéism or, if exhortation is all we can expect, we should at least be able to feel confident that those who spur us to better ways have accurately diagnosed what is wrong with those we practise now. Professor Williams, alas, fails his own test. Questioning many assumptions, in the end he fails to question his own.

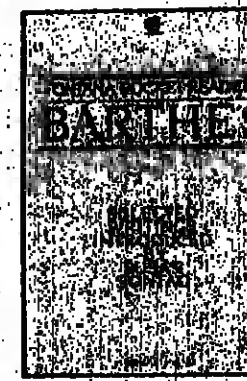
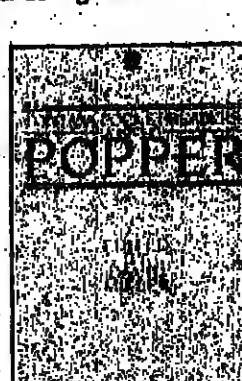
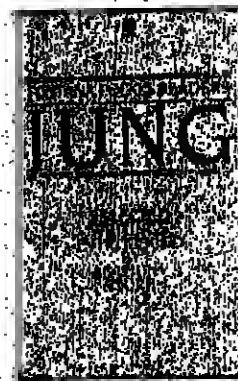
## Poet's Thought

The baby sparrow eyes a tiny crumb  
Like Nicklaus's final addressing of the ball.  
Tennys on wise, I think: whence do they come,  
The instinct and the near-religious call?

ROY FULLER

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# Problems of participation

F. C. T. Moore

DAVID PACE  
Claude Lévi-Strauss: The Bearer of Ashes  
263pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £14.95.  
0 7100 9297 0

Although he regards him as "one of the greats of twentieth century anthropological theory", David Pace does not, in this book, attempt a critical account of Lévi-Strauss's anthropological work in its own right. Rather, he tries to show the tenor of Lévi-Strauss's views outside anthropology proper, and to argue that these have been an important determinant of his position within anthropology, so that we cannot properly understand or assess his anthropology without considering them.

Pace knows that Lévi-Strauss himself would disagree with this, that Lévi-Strauss has often denied that his professional standing could or should lend authority to his wider views – denied, for instance, that the political views of the *salvants* should have any more weight than those of any other citizen. Thus Lévi-Strauss would surely repudiate any claim that his wider views could be relevant in assessing the validity of his anthropological work. But Pace thinks that he is wrong about this. For him, the anthropologist's disavowals are forms of dissimulation, and Lévi-Strauss's pretence that his professional work could lend no authority to his political views came, Pace argues, from his desire to avoid any commitment to political action. Equally, any denial by Lévi-Strauss that his political views could form a basis for his anthropological theories would be made in order to conceal their conservative tendency.

What then, according to Pace, are these wider views? We may summarize them as falling under three headings. First, in the psychological sphere, there is Lévi-Strauss's desire for "distance"; second, he holds a series of specific opinions on particular issues: respect for "primitive" cultures, despair at the spread of a universal monoculture originating in Western societies, rejection of the nineteenth-century evolutionists' account of human cultural development; and of historicism in general; third, there is a varying political commitment.

Pace's account of the psychological element, offered mainly through a reading of *Tristes Tropiques*, is somewhat lightweight. He seems not to appreciate the interesting psychological, methodological and indeed ethical questions which arise over the role of the anthropologist who does fieldwork; the problems of "participant observation". He writes of Lévi-Strauss's fieldwork in the Mato Grosso that "here, if ever, he should have been operating as a dispassionate scientist. . . . But as he himself admitted, his informants represented more to him than scientific data. . . . Well, of course they did. Again, Lévi-Strauss's remarks about the "chronic uprootedness" which tends to accompany the profession of anthropology are brushed aside with the observation that since anthropology is a profession, many anthropologists are, on the contrary, well-rooted, and, like Lévi-Strauss himself, in privileged ground.

The best achieved and most useful part of the book is where Pace reviews Lévi-Strauss's ideas on what might now be called "ecological" issues; as in this comment on the closing paragraph of *Tristes Tropiques*:

"There is no more touching passage in the entire corpus. . . . It expresses an expansive view of identity, an openness to the non-human universe, and a deep and abiding tolerance for difference. . . . It is only long since to counter the habits of our Western culture, in which the idea of culture is projected from its fellows by insurmountable geographical barriers and when nature itself is no longer secure from the assaults of man, that a message which must be heard."

However, when Pace turns to Lévi-Strauss's opposition to historicism, and to his supposed political views, this book is much less satisfactory. In two places he declares Lévi-Strauss's affinity to the anarchist tradition, suggesting that this is evident throughout his work. Elsewhere, he claims that Lévi-Strauss began his career as a socialist on the moderate left, and then moved steadily and quietly far to the right though his evidence for the latter claim is rather indirect.

But Pace's stated purpose is to demonstrate a link between such underlying positions and

Lévi-Strauss's anthropological theories. His attempts to do this are not convincing. Consider, for example, this treatment of the dispute between Lévi-Strauss and Maxime Rodinson. Rodinson, the French Marxist and writer on the Middle East, attacked Lévi-Strauss in two articles published in 1955, and Lévi-Strauss replied to this attack in the collection of articles published under the title of *Structural Anthropology*. Pace maintains that it was Rodinson who "really exposed the ideological structure of Lévi-Strauss's own position".

Oversimplifying the already oversimplified, we may say that Rodinson claimed that Lévi-Strauss's structuralist approach was lacking in any criterion to distinguish the more important and fundamental from less important and more trivial features of a society. It was relativistic, anti-historical, anti-progress, itself a manifestation of the decline of the bourgeoisie, in a word, it was reactionary. Lévi-Strauss replied by rejecting the unilinear model of cultural progress espoused by evolutionists like Mor-

gun, and which through its influence on Marx himself had become dominant in some forms of Marxism. Marxism was in no way essentially committed to this model, it could, and should, admit multiple patterns of historical development. Pace finds this interpretation of Marxism "rather strained".

Perhaps it is; but unfortunately his own account is rather shallow. Rodinson himself, for example, was expelled from the French Communist Party two years after the articles were written, and was then distancing himself from Stalinism. One of the crucial methodological issues which he later confronted was whether Marxist history does or does not require a unilinear model of historical development. His answer now was that it does not, that the unilinear model was wrong in itself, and that "institutional Marxism" had incorrectly foisted it upon Marx. It is thus striking to find Rodinson, still an avowed Marxist, adopt a position very similar to that advanced by Lévi-Strauss in his own defence.

## Dialectical drifting

Dan Sperber

JAMES A. BOON  
Other Tribes, Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Study of Cultures, Histories, Religions, and Texts  
303pp. Cambridge University Press. £20 (paperback, £7.50).  
0 521 25081 1

A discourse on other cultures, distant in space or in time, real or imaginary, admired or despised, is as much a standard component of culture as dietary rules or funerary rites. Modern Western anthropology is only one form of this discourse, with antecedents in history and counterparts throughout the world. James Boon's merit is to approach anthropology in this truly anthropological perspective.

Anthropologists are producers of texts. Professor Boon discusses, and illustrates with splendid quotations, anthropology as a literary activity, its evolution and rhetorical devices. He shows, for instance, how the shift from Sir James Frazer's grand compilation to Bronislaw Malinowski's functionalist monograph – a shift hailed as a scientific revolution – is in fact the displacement of one literary genre by another, both equally conventional. While Frazer developed a multidimensional allegory, "Malinowski's prose recounts about mechanistic models and conventions of space-time isolates that are associated with realist and naturalist novels (and literary theories)."

Allegorical compilations like Frazer's remained a lively genre from the late Renaissance to the beginning of this century (and Boon devotes an interesting chapter to Samuel Purchas's *Hakluytus Posthumus*, a seventeenth-century example). The functionalist monograph, on the other hand, has gone stale within a few decades. Boon links its rapid decay to the fact that

functionalism increasingly resisted self-awareness. Developed as a normal science, it eliminated any sense that the investigator's position was absurd. . . . The promise of complexity and full vision in Malinowski's *Argonauts* became a routine neo-utilitarianism. . . . Functionalism became an anthropology without irony.

Anthropology is anything but "normal science". Unlike, say, physics, it is not defined by general theories; unlike geography, it is not centred on particular facts; it is centred – if at all – on general attitudes to cultural identity and otherness, and on interpretations of particular facts derived from these attitudes. In all sciences, styles of scholarship are worthy of study; in anthropology, they are of its essence; more than explicit theories or methodological declarations, they open the way to an understanding of what an anthropology and anthropologists are about.

Boon, with his sense of gentle irony, his erudition and his literary sophistication could have written a much needed book on styles of anthropological scholarship, but in *Other Tribes, Other Scribes*, his ambitions are both grander and vaguer. The book is a potpourri of erudite themes. It discusses not only the work of straightforward anthropologists such as

Frazer, Malinowski, Sapir, Hocart, Benedict, Margaret Mead, Lévi-Strauss, Leach, or Geertz but also that of Marx, Durkheim, Eco, and Chomsky, Edmund Wilson, Kenneth Burke, Barthes and Foucault. It discusses Balinese incest, Indic literature, Jacobean England, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, tribal dualism, semiotics. "I proceed", Boon writes, "in a manner less sequential than episodic; my method is dialectical drifting. Sources proliferate as the book advances."

He is not trying to make any particular point or to explore systematically some well-defined topic. He is attempting, rather, to establish a new anthropological approach, somewhere between that of Geertz and that of Lévi-Strauss. Like Geertz, and unlike Lévi-Strauss, Boon believes that the social sciences are radically different from the natural sciences; they seek interpretations based on intuitive understanding rather than causal explanations based on general laws. Like Lévi-Strauss, and unlike Geertz, he sets great store by the methodological and theoretical apparatus of structuralist semiotics.

Boon, however, is not writing a systematic account or a manifesto. He proceeds indirectly: by exemplifying the attitude of ironical understanding he wishes to countenance, by attacking the Enlightenment and its heirs, and by semiotizing – rather than presenting – his mind of premises. The trouble is, he displays little understanding in his attacks, and little irony in his praises.

A very liberal quote of original sources in other places Boon discusses the Enlightenment at length with the help of long quotations from Foucault, Michel de Certeau and other secondary sources. It would be unfair to say that he fails, since he does not even attempt to give a sense of the intellectual consistency and attractiveness of the Enlightenment view of human nature. He balks at the very idea of a human nature and never inquires into its positive content. He remains puzzled: "Because ideals of a uniformitarian nature behind cultural diversity are by no means the profoundest legacy of the Enlightenment, their tenacity grows all the more provocative." When provoked by some cultural puzzle, anthropologists are supposed to try to solve it by achieving a deeper understanding of the issues. Boon, when provoked, does not question his own understanding, he merely counter-attacks.

In order to "see things from the native's point of view", anthropologists pay great attention to native concepts and theories, as does Boon himself in his work on Bali. However, when the native is a member of the anthropologist's own society, and belongs to the wrong parish, respectful interpretation too often gives way to unabashed distortion. For instance, Plagel's structuralist view of language, and constructivist view of language acquisition, contrast sharply and explicitly with Chomsky's generativist view of language and nativist view of acquisition (see M. Piattelli-Palmarini, ed. *Language and Learning: The Debate between Jean Piaget and Noam Chomsky*, 1983). Boon, however, gives Plagel's ideas as

his example of a "generative model". Chomsky's "deep structure" is certainly one of the most explicitly developed notions in the human sciences; it is quite technical and, as anybody who cares knows, bears no relationship to any ordinary idea of depth. Boon links Chomsky's phrase but does not care for Chomsky's meaning. What is he talking about, though, when he writes: "Chomsky's transformation seems practically puritanical. Surface structures mask nothing; they merely realize deep structure, or: 'the self-containedness of transformationism sustains a uniformitarian hope of detecting the deep structure of all languages'."

Carelessly dismissive in his attacks on "uniformitarianism", Boon descends into a literary when praising semiotics: Semiotics displaces autonomous individuals as privileged reference points. . . . semiotics avoids as well reducing meaning to reference. . . . today semiotics is vast beyond measure. . . . semiotics doubtless knows lines and inextricable faces. . . . semiotics cannot against explaining away cultural variation. . . . semiotics is, or should be, both dialectical and reflexive. . . . semiotic methodologists are forever refining models of communication and meaning. . . . semiotics opens the space between the essentially materialistic alternatives of patent physicality versus clairvoyance. . . .

Good as he is at exposing other writers' rhetorical tricks, Boon is, I suspect, carried away by his own rhetoric when he writes: "The innovative anthropology of meaning proceeds apace while issues in depth psychology and linguistic 'deep structure' remain unresolved." This antithesis is spurious. Any lively discipline – and, surely, psychology and linguistics are – will proceed apace and leaving issues unresolved. Boon, therefore, could have written with equal truth (but with the reverse effect): "Depth psychology and the study of linguistic 'deep structure' proceed apace while issues in the comparative anthropology of meaning remain unresolved." He is indeed a very directive writer. He wants to play the tune, call the steps, and lead the dance. He keeps telling or suggesting to his readers precisely what he wants them to think, even when he cannot spare the time to tell them why they should think it. Again and again he winks or points: half his numerous quotations have "emphasis added" or interjections in square brackets. At the same time, I am afraid, Boon attributes to his readers an omniscience and a degree of mental agility that only gods possess. Thus:

I shall argue that, for Weber, nonrationally explained even rationalized Western music is analogous to the nonrationally behind the historical and cultural variations of ideal-types, which is the type behind the reasons why he proclaimed comparative interpretation the promise of the West's intellectual future.

Or: remembering that both *Burmes and the Mahabharata* are, at comically different moments, variations on possibilities in Dumézil's "Indo-European Ideology", I read the *Francia* as a *swayanvara* run discursively rampant.

There are moody subtle fragrances in Boon's prose, but most readers, including this reviewer, do not have the gods' ability to feel the smells.

## Revamping the revolution

Norman Hampson

RONALD PAULSON  
Representations of Revolution 1789-1820  
263pp. Yale University Press. £22.50.  
0 301 02864 4

RONNIE BUTLER  
Babes and the French Revolution  
273pp. Croom Helm. £15.95.  
New Jersey: Barnes and Noble  
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Ronald Paulson's *Representations of Revolution* is based on the assumption that the French Revolution confronted European society with a number of wholly unprecedented stimuli and challenges. The most obvious of these was the attempt to create a new and better way of life, to translate into political fact what had previously been no more than millenarian dreams. This was it in that dawn to be alive. As the revolution became the Terror and eventually developed into a new form of dictatorship, it raised the question of whether such regeneration had actually been possible, or whether yesterday's rebels were always doomed to become tomorrow's tyrants and new presbyters were bound to be old priests writ large. It is Paulson's contention that writers and artists were peculiarly aware of the moral questions posed by the revolution, with its disclosure of unsuspected dimensions to man's capacity for violence and degradation. Their struggles to come to terms with this new experience had profound consequences for both their lives and their art, Blake and Goya in particular. "Free from the constraining situation of the successful revolution, which requires apologists only . . . came up with the same revolutionary scenario in which the people revolt and break away from tyranny only to destroy each other and set up a worse tyranny".

So far so good, but what may serve to illuminate the work of a particular artist or writer can become an implausible and depersonalized orthodoxy if individual responses are all said to converge into one general pattern. This is especially true when, as here, the reactions of both revolutionaries and artists are subjected to a dogmatically Freudian interpretation. What should have been an investigation of the individual responses of different people comes to look like a military manoeuvre in which all the recruits are made to go through the same evolutions, where their personal identity is subordinated to a pattern of behaviour that exists in its own right and for its own purposes. Even if one were to accept the Freudian thesis as fundamentally correct, it would empty the particular experience of its specific significance. It is not very helpful to be told that what the French did to Louis XVI was a kind of Oedipal drama in which the sons of their father, since this would presumably be equally true of Charles I and Nicholas II. Instead of helping us to understand what was unique about the French Revolution, and people's reactions to it, the experience loses any particular significance.

Inevitably, if one is going in for this sort of thing, inconvenient evidence tends to get bent into more tractable shape. Thus we are told that Saint-Just was "a young man seduced in his father's daughter and wrote a pornographic novel" before ending his days as a revolutionary Puritan. He did indeed change from a near-monarchist to an autocrat, but in actual fact his mother prevented him from marrying a girl whom she considered to be his social inferior; *Organon* was not a novel but a poem, inspired by Voltaire's *Pucelle* and only mildly licentious, and when Saint-Just became a member of the Committee of Public Safety, he brought his old friend to live with him in Paris.

Paulson might reasonably object that his concern is with literature rather than with history, but his treatment of the literary evidence can be equally tendentious. Wordsworth's *Imagination* is interpreted as a reference to the French Revolution. Has any Englishman ever thought of France as being in the east? "It seems not possible to write about the Revolution and not to be aware of the categories first introduced by Burke in his *Reflections*". Most of those who wrote about the Revolution seem to have

managed quite well, but for Paulson any conventional reference to it as a storm or the bursting of buds in spring must imply a conscious *rappel* of every other use of these scarcely surprising metaphors.

Paulson is, in fact, a virtuoso of the Glass Bead Game. He has a passion for drawing parallels and seeing relationships where none existed. He manages to get Wolfe Tone, Sheridan and the Marquis de Sade into one sentence. Writing of Goya's *Taurromachia*, he says "the bull itself would have recoiled to Jovellanos' circle Burke's reference to it as a sublime animal". Perhaps they were indeed familiar

claim to a certain historical originality. This quality is not only expressed in the way that his characters re-enact the processes he describes. It also emerges in a more strictly scholarly sense, through the substantial evidence which he offers on specific questions which continue to engage the attention of historians. "What finally matters . . . is the remarkable accuracy of the *Comédie Humaine* in anticipating historical findings."

One can see his point: to the extent that the *Comédie Humaine* was a panorama rather than a vignette, the description of an age rather than a few portraits, Balzac had to get it more or less



Francisco Goya's *Quinta del Sordo*; Duet with Cudgels, reproduced from *Representations of Revolution* (1789-1820) by Ronald Paulson which is reviewed on this page.

with Burke's *Enquiry*, but how many of the readers of that interesting treatise can remember what Burke said in it about bulls? Freud's influence is particularly mischievous when it encourages Paulson to link, not what is actually said in different places, but what he believes to be its latent significance. It will not have occurred to many readers of *Northingham Abbey* that General Tilney's dismissal of Catherine because of her suspected designs on his heir had anything in common with the crowd's intrusion into the palace of Versailles on October 6, 1789, and its alleged attempt to "ravish the wife-daughter-mother". It presumably did not occur to Jane Austen either. Even if the parallel were not impossibly far-fetched, even if one were to accept the whole Freudian basis of Paulson's investigation, it would tell us nothing about Jane Austen's mind or art. Paulson becomes the prisoner of his own erudition. His knowledge, especially of the British sources, is formidable. Indeed, but it tends to impede understanding and to lead him, time after time, into implausible attributions of influence.

What with Freud and the endless cross-references, the reader has a hard time of it. Paulson is rather fond of such passages as: "The implication of the object-loss being withdrawn from consciousness is that the object which is generally attributed to love of the 'human being' is linked to that first object-loss or castration-fear which is exercised in the totem-meal, and further that at its extremity of reference the lost penis-object is also bound analogously, as a detachable part of the body functioning in a system of exchange, to excrement and babies, items essential to the saturnalian rituals and the witches' Sabbath." Anyone who finds this obscure – or perhaps even funny – is unlikely to respond favourably to the book. This is a pity, since Paulson has important things to say, if one can penetrate to his message, and some of his parallels really are illuminating.

In *Balzac and the French Revolution*, Ronnie Butler might seem to be dealing with a particular example of Paulson's general problem, but there the similarity ends. There is no Freud, no cosmic Angst; everything is discussed and evaluated on the conscious level of material interests and social classes. Butler gets off to a somewhat laboured start. He takes Balzac, rather too literally, in his claim to have been "more of a historian than a novelist". Emphasizing that he himself is not a professional historian, Butler is perhaps more in awe of the discipline than his regular practitioners. The first part of his book therefore consists of a painstaking investigation of the extent to which Balzac's account of the fortunes of nobles, *émigrés* and bourgeois corresponds to the findings of historical research. He even implies that Balzac is to be judged as a novelist by his accuracy as a social historian. "Balzac is not only remarkably accurate in the details of his

right. But what "finally matters", since he did, after all, choose, as a novelist, to invent imaginary people rather than to describe real ones as a historian, is not whether the economic fortunes of his *émigrés* taken as a whole correspond exactly to those of the actual *émigrés*, but how well he can communicate what it felt like to be an *émigré*. If he had not managed this he would have failed outright, however accurate his knowledge of the economic fortunes of a group or a class. Butler's inability to appreciate this leads to some rather tedious and unhelpful comparisons.

To be fair, he does hint at rather more interesting conclusions. "The contribution which Balzac makes to an understanding of post-revolutionary society is not to be measured, however, in statistical terms or even in what he suggests about the composition of social classes and professional groups. Its interest lies in its fruitful registering of contemporary attitudes to the changes arising from the Revolution, above all to traditional notions of status challenged by the acceleration in social mobility" [sic – presumably "mobility"]. He also suggests that it was Balzac's *préface*, his insistence on attributing to the revolution most of the things he disliked in the society around him, that led him to distort the evidence. Thus he exaggerated the extent to which both bourgeois and peasants had gained land as a result of the revolution, and he was wrong about the revolutionary inclinations of the peasantry in the nineteenth century. On the opposite tack, presumably to persuade himself that the returned *émigrés* could still have dominated the society of the Restoration, he was inclined to exaggerate

the extent to which they recovered their estates. In the early part of Butler's book, such hints of motivated distortion are rather scanty and he is prone to lapse into rather naive complaints that Balzac is "lacking in both rigour and completeness" when compared with Greer, Gain, Marion or Vidalenc, or to regret that he is inclined to concentrate on bankers and to neglect industrialists.

Towards the end of the book, however, Butler manages to free himself from his obsession with statistical accuracy and to develop a much more interesting argument. Balzac to some extent anticipated both Darwin and Marx. He believed human society to be subject to the same laws of biological determinism as the rest of nature, and he thought that social evolution was to be understood in terms of classes rather than of individuals. This put him squarely in the nineteenth century. Butler compares him to Scott, in the sense that he was divided between nostalgia for the values of a vanished society and a realistic awareness that these had become anachronistic. He could also have pointed out that Balzac's conviction that social equality implied mediocrity was reminiscent of the views that Tocqueville expressed in *Democracy in America*. This was a different world from that of Blake and Goya, and some sort of intellectual watershed had been crossed. Like his predecessors, however, Balzac found himself unable to arrive at a consistent view of the consequences of the revolution. Like some Marxists, he found it impossible to enthuse over a "bourgeois" revolution that he nevertheless believed to be not merely inevitable but progressive. If social evolution indeed meant the replacement of the unfit by the fitter, he should have applauded the advent to power of a class whose dynamism he recognized and the eclipse of an aristocracy that he himself was inclined to castigate as effete. The tensions created by his inability to accept what he believed to be inevitable perhaps helped to make the novelist, as they might have marred a historian.

There was another contradiction in Balzac's position: he believed both in the need for social stability, based on the existence of a stable hierarchy, and in a process of struggle and competition from which would emerge leaders of outstanding enterprise and ability. It was only towards the latter part of the July Monarchy that his growing fear of social revolution led him to write off the nobility as a lost cause and finally to accept the advent of the bourgeoisie. This still did not resolve his problem since a bourgeois political order implied an electoral political régime that was anathema to him. In the end he opted for an authoritarian solution: Butler sums up his attraction for him very well: "Neo-Bonapartism offered for Balzac the rare advantage of being a populist form of authoritarianism which guaranteed bourgeois interests and at the same time caught the social and nationalist imagination of the masses." It might not have appealed to the tormented spirits, exalted and appalled by the direct experience of revolution, whom Paulson studies, but for Balzac it was the logical way out.

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# Small persistent difficulties

Thom Gunn

ROBERT CREELEY  
The Collected Poems 1945-1975  
678pp. Marion Boyars. £16.  
0 714527 98 X

Popular though Robert Creeley's poetry has become in recent years, its language has never fitted in with the official current notions of the poetic. For example, the verbs do not work harder than, say, the adjectives; there is as little metaphor as in the most straightforward prose; and the diction throughout tends to be general, unsuited to the sensory effects we prize nowadays. So much for the orthodoxies of the twentieth century, Creeley might remark, but I am left trying to reconcile my conviction that poetry does work primarily through the vigour of its language with my experience that his poetry does speak to me, and to many others, in a way that is powerful and persuasive.

How does his language work, then? In commenting on the neutrality of Creeley's diction, one poet has evoked the name of Waller, and another has compared his pared-down anti-rhetorical flatness to the plain style of an early Elizabethan like Barnabe Googe. Nor do you have to go far to pick up Renaissance echoes: here is a poem from about 1960 called "For Friendship":

For friendship  
make a chain that holds,  
to be bound to  
others, two by two,  
a walk, a parlance,  
handed by hands  
that cannot move  
unless they hold.

Neither Waller nor Googe are inappropriate names to connect with this sweet-natured and sweet-sounding generalization, in which the complete neutrality of language exposes a density of definition, and if the sheer melody of Waller is not achieved (or even aimed at), it is in a sense glanced at by the tetrameters, which Creeley both creates and at the same time carefully rejects in the lineation of the first stanza. The rejection of regularity, minute though it is here, already points to a great difference between Creeley's and any Renaissance practice. The poem reminisces about laments but it has its own slightly shifted rhythm, which is sustained not by a tradition but by the varying pace of the singular voice.

If Creeley has come to dislike simile, finally, as "always a displacement of what is happening", he has come also to dislike all regularization, because it does something like the same thing. In a recent interview he said about Charles Tompkins's use of the triadic line, which was invented late in life by William Carlos Williams, that Tompkins was "missing where the initiating impulse is in Williams". It is all important for him then to be true to what is happening, to stick to the initiating impulse, to keep from what he sees as the dead predictabilities of a systematized rhythm or language. Throughout his career I notice the recurring term of *stumbling* for his poetic procedure, most recently in the "Prayer to Hermes" (from *Later*; not included in the *Collected Poems*), in which he addresses the god,

My luck  
is your gift  
my meloncholy  
breaks my stumbling  
If one stumbles, left or pushed by impulse, one stumbles into the unforeseen, the accidental. Even so, the accidental may have its patterns. In a poem of more than twenty years ago, "For Love", he says:  
Let me stumble into  
not the confession but  
the obsession, I begin with  
now

A confession may be for once only, but an obsession recurs. However, it recurs as something felt afresh and with its original force; to adopt Lavrentian terms, you might say that it rises up again as a renewal and not a repetition. The poetics of impulse and renewed accident is closer to Lawrence's "poetry of the present" ("flexible to every breath", said Lawrence) than to the sentences, or perhaps cynical epigrams, of Googe's beautiful poem "Of Money".

It was Creeley who made the famous remark that form is never more than an extension of content, and in so far as the accidents of composition are embodied in the surviving poem, his remark is constantly illustrated, for he apparently does not tidy up the odd, the peculiar, or the awkward. His suggestive or at times puzzling strangeness is directly opposed to the calculations behind those kinds of rhetoric of which he has so much dread. There is for example the disconcerting language of the last lines of "The Whip": "for which act / I think to say this / wrongly", where because the reference of "this" is unclear and the locution "I think to" unusual, the whole poem is called in question: thus the characteristics of the style enter the content of the poem, as they always must.

Easy as Creeley's poetry looks at first glance, then, much of it is to be grasped only with the closest attention. The *Collected Poems* is a formidable volume to read straight through: even though it stops short at 1975, thus omitting two later books, it is 678 agreeably printed pages long. You are lucky in fact if you have had the opportunities to read most of the work as it came out. In the original collections over the last thirty years.

But certain general impressions strike me at once about his career as a whole. The first is that the style goes through only quite minor changes from beginning to end. I find more of the wonderful comedy early on, and the most recent poetry of all (I am thinking of *Later*) has been hospitable to some dreadfully soft emotion about growing old, but essentially the poetry is still written with the same plain, terse language and the same sure command over the verse movement. The next general tendency is that there are changes in the organization of the poems volume by volume. The early poems are complete in themselves, independent of each other, however much they may share themes. In the collections of the 1970s, however - *Pieces* and *In London*, for example - poem leads into poem, group leads into group, and the book rather than the individual poem becomes the meaningful unit. There is also in these books far more fragmentary material included - what you might plausibly call notebook jottings, some of them interesting in connection with the rest of the work or with our thinking about Creeley, some of them less so. The poetics of accident may permit a stumble of this sort, entitled "Kid":

"What are you doing?"  
Writing some stuff.  
"You n' poet?"  
Now and then.

Form here is only too clearly an extension of content. It can afford to comment with a certain usurbity because my admiration is so great elsewhere: I want to warn the new reader who dips into the enormous book and pulls out this kind of thing before coming to the good writing. But it would be a mistake for any critic to train his big guns on such minimal poems; there are a large number of them, exercises, notations, experiments, jokes, but after all, there is a certain proportion of deadness present in the complete collected works of any poet.

In one sense, though, "Kid" is a characteristic poem; for its very modesty. It is an epigram, of sorts. Creeley is at once to be differentiated from his old associates Olson and Duncan by the kind of poem he wants to write. Where their ambitions were epic, expansive, inclusive, drawing upon whole libraries of external material, his were doggedly narrower, drawing almost entirely on the irregular pulse of the personal. This is not to say that he aims at the "lyric", even though he has entitled many a poem "Song", for with him it is the speaking voice that matters, not singing or lyric but stumbling, with all the appearance of improvisation, tentatively and unevenly moving forward, but with a singular gift of "melodious breath", a gift for the true-sounding measure that Williams himself once praised. (Before you accuse Creeley of speaking in cliché about his lines taking "the beat from the breath", you should remember that it was he and Olson who originated the phrase; it is not their fault that others offered it into platitude.) And his narrow subject matter, that field of energy through which he stumbles, is the intensely apprehended detail of the heterosexual private life. The feeling in his best poetry is fresh and

clean; as though it is discovering itself just as it gets written. Creeley takes nothing for granted, and if his doing so makes for the wonderful unexpected funniness of "I know a man", and for the hilarious lines in his serious troubadour poem "The Dour", and for the frankness of "Something", the poem about the pee-shy lover, it is also responsible for a deep awareness of vulnerability like that illustrated in the note about going through New York in a taxi where he records his "continual sense of small . . . persistent difficulties". The vulnerability exposed in Creeley's poetry is almost constant. But nobody has ever pretended that stumbling was a fluid motion; it is, precisely, an encountering of small persistent difficulties in moving ahead, and if the phrase about New York describes one of the main subjects of his poetry it of course can be taken to refer to the style as well. Finally you could say that his strength arises from his constant perception of weakness. If he is the most heterosexual of poets he is also the least macho.

One situation you can find again and again in Creeley is that of the speaker in bed, either alone or not, uneasily lapsing in and out of sleep, in and out of dream. It occurs for example in a well-known poem, "The World", which starts:

I wanted so ably  
to reassure you, I wanted  
the man you took to be me,

to comfort you, and got  
up, and went to the window,  
pushed back, as you asked me to,

the curtain, to see  
the outline of the trees  
in the night outside.

To hear a reading by Creeley at his best is to be aware of the importance he gives to line-endings. He makes a point of pointing on them *always*, whether there is punctuation or not: his free verse line is thus always preserved as an audibly identified unit. The result is a kind of eloquent stammering; there is a sense of small persistent difficulties all right, but of each being overcome in turn, while it occurs - the voice hesitates, and then plunges forward. You can see how such a reading suits the above lines, with what kind of obstinate holding-on it must stumble forward, even past the interruption, the almost pushed-in qualification, of "as you asked me to", and finally getting there, to the end of the sentence, having thus *felt* its way through the poem's opening. The movement forward in these lines is certainly as much part of the meaning as the language itself, which is usual is plain in the extreme. Plain yet not always obvious: "ably" makes a point of much subtlety about the kind of firm flexibility he would have if he were the man she took him to be. And that third line, a breath-unit in itself, implies a large and complicated statement without assumptions and appearances. I want to go on to quote the rest of the poem, taking it in two more parts, not only because it is one of Creeley's best but because once you have come to terms with it you have made an entry into all of his work by discovering the comprehensiveness of packed life beneath the apparently simple and prosaic surface. It is a bare scene indeed: nothing much, nothing physical anyway, has been seen with clarity, nothing much has been done. An outline of trees is visible, that is all, because a curtain has been pushed back. But an outline of certain feelings has also been suggested, and that gives us something to go on when we embark on the long second sentence:

The light, love,  
the light we felt then,  
greyly, was it, that

came in on us, not  
merely my hands or yours,  
or a witness so comfortable,  
but in the dark then  
as you slept, the grey  
figure came so close  
and leaned over,  
between us, as you  
slept, restless, and  
my own face had to be  
seen by it, and seen by  
the man it was, your  
grey lost (it had bewitched  
brother, unused, unloved,  
kissed by boys, and dead)

but not dead, for an  
instant, saw me, myself  
the intruder, as he was not.

It is a sentence so thick with comma-enclosed qualifications, because so much is happening simultaneously, that you can easily lose yourself in it. But the remedy is in the voice: it is even truer of Creeley than of most poets that the way to understand him is to learn how to read him aloud. From testing one reading against another you can "feel out" what it is "we felt" that ties the first part of the sentence together. We felt not merely each other's hands, not merely the witness (of orgasm, it must be), but the grey light which in dream vision engulfs to the ghost of the dead brother. Such exploration with the voice shows the density of the sentence to be wonderfully justified: it is not sensory writing in the usual way, but like Tennyson or Hart Crane, but it is as if, rather, Creeley goes directly to the organs that do the sensing. Synaesthesia occurs casually and as a matter of course. And the greyness when it comes the third time has become a quality of being - for the grey brother who lived in some limbo, where he still momentarily persists, was "unused, unloved"; his greyness, his indefiniteness was such that "the world" had no use for him at all, it did not even exploit him. The reading voice (mine, yours, not necessarily Creeley's) continues, interrupting itself, but resuming, into a further change. The ghost intruder for an instant looks on me, the speaker, as the intruder in the bed. That is the man he takes me to be. By comparison with him even I seem "able" - competent, fluent, potent - belonging as I do to the world of the living. The pathos is far-reaching.

I tried to say, it is  
all right, she is  
happy, you are no longer  
needed. I said,  
he is dead, and he  
went as you shifted  
and woke, at first afraid,  
then knew by my own knowing  
what had happened -

and the light then  
of the sun coming  
for another morning  
in the world.

The last line would perhaps be weak if "the world", though not referred to as such before this, had not picked up so much weight of the meaning during the poem as a whole. The world here is the real world with its common-sense light contrasting to the grey light of the love-making and the ghost: but wasn't it also the place that produced the brother, that rejected him so thoroughly before his death? The reassurance of the new day is tempered by the implication that we are creating our own ghosts of deprivation and despair as we go about our lives.

The poem is characteristic of Creeley at his best. He has gone beyond, or behind, the classic twentieth-century split between image and discourse: he does not attempt sharpness of the physical image, and the discursive part of the poetry is more aptly termed "assertion" (the word used of it by Robert Pinsky, the poet who compared him to Googe). Though "The World" takes a narrative form it is like many of Creeley's non-narrative poems, in that the real course it follows is that of the mind, wandering, but at the same time trying to focus in on its own wandering and to map a small part of its course accurately and honestly, however idiosyncratic that course may seem to be. The young people at Overton's, the public where he works as marketing manager, seem to him to have "somehow pre-dated him and his friends". He is thirty-six.

The *Good Father* is set at the time of the Balkan War, when it became clear even to those who had ignored it before that the attitudes of the 1960s were no longer tenable. Though the orange fog of Hooper's nostalgia from the totems of his boyhood, patriarchal and patriotic. He is disconcerted to find himself day-dreaming about old films; he is puzzled when she suddenly veers away from him, until he raises his hand to his face, feels his mouth and discovers that "it had been a grimace, a snarl that he had been offering the poor woman". The court case, similarly, is intended as a crusade against the monstrous regiment but is perceived, even by Miles's barrister, as an odious Thatcherite, as a vicarious release for Hooper's guilt and frustration about his own domestic problems. The effects of the case's lies and traumas on Hooper's circle and its possible relation to the larger issues of the day are conveyed in an admirably sober and satisfying surprise of them all.

Like a good treatment of the sex war, *The Good Father* is full of surprising reversals, as characters find themselves acting at variance with their declared principles or are tripped up by their motives. Peter Prince signals his intentions in the first chapter, when Hooper, approached by an old friend at a party, gives her "a broad smile of welcome"; he is puzzled when she suddenly veers away from him, until he raises his hand to his face, feels his mouth and discovers that "it had been a grimace, a snarl that he had been offering the poor woman". The court case, similarly, is intended as a crusade against the monstrous regiment but is perceived, even by Miles's barrister, as an odious Thatcherite, as a vicarious release for Hooper's guilt and frustration about his own domestic problems. The effects of the case's lies and traumas on Hooper's circle and its possible relation to the larger issues of the day are conveyed in an admirably sober and satisfying surprise of them all.

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# Scars to be proud of

Adam Mars-Jones

JUDITH ROSSNER  
August  
270pp. Cape. £8.50.  
0241021729

The modest heroines of Judith Rossner's recent fiction, Teresa in *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* and Dianne and Nadine in *Attachments*, were confronted with destructiveness, their own as well as the world's; Teresa was killed by a casual pickup, while Dianne and Nadine presarried their husbands (who were Siamese twins) into being surgically separated, and then left them. Her new novel, without exactly humming with optimism, has a new emphasis: on repairing damage, and living with scars.

August, traditionally, is the month when New York therapists take their holidays, leaving patients to cope with their interior lives as best they can. Dr Lulu Shinefeld is a successful, hard-working analyst, who deserves a break from the intellectual and emotional demands of the job; but her new patient, a young woman named Dawn Henley, has a terror of being deserted even for a month. For Dawn, acceptance is provisional and rejection definitive; every August the people who have allowed her to depend on them disappear, and the progress made since September slips away.

With Lulu, however, Dawn is able to overcome setbacks and consolidate her knowledge of herself. The analysis occupies the even-numbered chapters, Lulu's private life the odd-numbered ones, but inevitably the two subjects overlap. Dawn's parents died while she was still an infant, and she was brought up by her aunt Vera (whom she called "Daddy") until she was taught differently at school and Vera's lover Antonia (first "Mummy" and later "Tony"); so she is well used to female parent-figures. Lulu for her part has a runaway daughter from an unconsidered first marriage (as well as two teenage sons from an over-considered second one), and at some level seeks to atone for past mistakes by her treatment of this new patient.

Lulu is an astonishingly sensitive analyst, able to see at once that Dawn's lithograph of a face of Venetian blinds also embodies her feelings about the slatted crib of her childhood. Lulu's concern with the elaboration of meaning, the discovery of significance in the trivial, is so close to a novelist's purposes that the point of view in the analysis chapters is virtually hers. Consequently there are moments of awkwardness when Dr Lulu becomes the narrative's subject, while the camera dollies back on squeaky wheels to include her in the frame. All that is left over from Dr Lulu for the narrative voice is a sort of distant sharpness which comes close to being clumsy: "Lulu Kagan Shinefeld had grown up on West End Avenue in Manhattan in one of those crust-stable middle-class households that make it possible to argue for or against the notion that the sum of one's neuroses is equal to the square of the neuroses of the previous generation."

This represents a real decline from the wry wit of so much of the book; *August* describes a world in which marriages are often open, but only at one end, and in which analysts, thanks to their professional knowledge of human motivation, make advanced mistakes in their own lives, rather than elementary ones. In due course Dr Lulu, recently divorced from her analyst husband, starts an affair with another analyst, thus further squaring the neuroses; but again the narrative voice loses its flexibility.

The chapters of Dawn's analysis, though, are consistently successful; the traumatic scene which Dr Lulu enables her to recover is both convincing and unexpected. Dr Lulu's feelings, too, which she must control during her sessions, are well brought out: "even if you were too smart to go for the happiness fantasy on your own behalf, that didn't mean you were exempt from wanting some for your patients". There is a satisfying passage near the end of the book where Lulu's daughter Sascha, now returned, speculates about the radiant young woman (Dawn) she has seen emerging from Dr Lulu's office: "I have it! She was left on your doorstep as an infant and you've raised her as one of your own. Except you did everything right with her. She was a sort of control." Sascha's fantasy isn't so different from her mother's.

*August* is about pain and maturity; it also proposes influence and self-obsession as necessary elements of modern life. But Judith Rossner's skills as a novelist are such that she can postpone almost indefinitely in her reader's head the thought that these are enviable wounds, scars to be proud of.

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# Stains and all

Victoria Rothschild

ERIN PIZZEE  
The Watershed  
402pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.  
0241111366

*The Watershed* is an analysis of a broken marriage, a sort of family saga from the psychotherapeutic point of view. Rachel is a typical wife and mother: warm, loving, caring, natural, trusting, harassed; she can't cook. Is a bit messy about the house, takes valium a lot, and her poor self-image reflects not her own but her husband's point of view. Charles, on the other hand, is a typical man: a misogynist, a lying cheating bastard, in short (as is explained later by the Matron figure) a narcissist, and it's all his mother's fault. Those sons who aren't their mothers' fault are a pretty weedy bunch.

The novel starts with Rachel lying in a hospital bed waiting for a visit from Charles and the children. Her ward is the one "for all the flotsam and jetsam of female failures, the depressives, the neurotics, the divorced, the aborted, the anorexics". The rest of the novel is littered with such types, and with related issues: mothers and sons, valium addiction, a bit of battering, the women's movement, masturbation, breakdowns, child molesting, stains, murder, epistomomy, suicide, auto-insemination, incest, menstruation, class, the New Age women's movement, antisemitism, sodomy, adultery, lesbianism, a bit of librium, breast-feeding, glue sniffing, even a line or two of cocaine.

In keeping with the notion of an analysis, *The Watershed* is divided into three sections. "Past Tense" documents the family backgrounds of Charles and Rachel for two generations. Rachel had a happy, if protected, childhood with her two maiden aunts, whose happy childhoods are also described, as are the childhoods of her illegitimate grandparents Lionel

and his whore with the heart of gold, Regine. There are accounts of early sexual experiences: Lionel's with his nurse. Regine's with her father, Rachel's with the convent cat.

Charles, meanwhile, isn't so well off. His mother Julia - "she who had only ever seen her husband without clothes" [sic] - is therefore horrified when she first sees baby Charles's technicolour genitals, but eventually takes to breast-feeding and does it to him for two years. When she then has a daughter, and ditches Charles, he, poor chap, has to spend the rest of his life taking it out on women.

The second section, "Charles and Rachel", gives the furniture of their life together, which includes the lives of certain of their friends: the lesbian mother, the frustrated housewife, the scheming mistress, the female mosochist. The eponymous final section shows the consequences of the breakdown: Rachel, helped by her friends, can now look in the mirror; she learns to cook and be autonomous, goes to New York in search of a "real" man, has a lesbian relationship, and finds that there's a lot in *Cosmopolitan* for her. Charles is disposed of in a suitable manner.

The many issues have been tackled so lightly on to token characters that they seem to have little to do with the human causes and effects from which Erin Pizzee means them to arise; the people simply serve the issues. In fact *The Watershed* reads like a string of case histories, thoroughly researched but distractingly detailed. The idea that you can always explain and apologize for personality and emotions can be taken too far; it can demystify and lay bare too much. What is left is a good deal of information but little else, and that strains for authenticity:

Melissa looked up at Rachel and smiled. Her teeth looked quite dingy against the white of her lipstick, and one of her false eyelashes was coming unstuck at the corner. However, her bee-hive hairdo stood piled high on her head, and she had the longest pair of winkle-pickers Rachel had ever seen. "Melissa's from London," said Paul.

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# Mr A. A. to the Pfalzgräfin von Zweibrücken-Birkenfeld

Robert Halsband

The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence  
Volume 43: Additions and Corrections, compiled by Edwin M. Martz, with the assistance of Ruth K. McClure and William T. La Moy. 649pp.  
0 19 648038

Volumes 44-48: Index, compiled by Warren Hunting Smith, with the assistance of Edwin M. Martz, Ruth K. McClure and William T. La Moy. 3,002pp.  
(Volume 44, 0 19 638039 6, Volume 45, 0 19 638040 X, Volume 46, 0 19 638041 8, Volume 47, 0 19 638042 6, Volume 48, 0 19 638043 4)  
Oxford University Press. £50 each.

At last, forty-six years after its inauguration, the Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's *Correspondence* comes to an end with a five-volume index to all forty-three volumes. Only one sad note dampens the rejoicing: W. S. Lewis, the founder, editor-in-chief and financial angel, was deprived by death (in 1979) of the satisfaction of seeing the final volumes in print.

As a foyer into the index we have a volume of *Additions and Corrections*. These, occupying about 400 pages, contain much that is useful: new letters and (more often) exact transcriptions from manuscripts of letters already printed, factual corrections and additional information discovered. Some additions are superfluous, such as frequent citations of Grove's *New Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, a standard reference work. And far too many corrections are trivial: punctuation (Mrs for

Mrs.), upper-case letters, accent marks, typographical errors. (Since misprints also occur in this volume, can we look forward to the publication of corrected corrections?) In textual jargon, only substantive corrections should have been admitted. Then comes a subject index of the 324 illustrations in the whole set, then a list of Walpole's correspondents, and finally—what is most valuable—a chronological list of all the letters and their location in the set.

Why valuable? Since the set is made up of various correspondences, each of them in separate chronological order, this single all-inclusive list enables one to gather from the scattered series all the letters for a particular period. Suppose the reader wishes to know what Walpole and his friends thought of the initial blaze of the French Revolution: the year 1789 in the list would lead to all the letters for that year in their scattered volumes. Heretofore Mrs Toynbee's edition (1903-05), a single sequence of only Walpole's letters, has served as the crutch to hobble from her readable but incomplete, bowdlerized and lightly annotated pages to the magisterial tomes of the Yale Walpole.

The index opens with an unidentified Mr A. A., who visited Paris in 1766, and closes with the Pfalzgräfin von Zweibrücken-Birkenfeld, who—as we discover after being cross-referred to Maria Franziska Dorothea (1724-94)—received a bequest from the Electress Palatine. From A to Z, in every sense, the index, in 3,000 double-columned pages, is as meticulously thorough as human minds can contrive. It encompasses the contents of an enormous correspondence from 1725, when the eight-year-old boy wrote to his mother, to 1797, when the

tottery old man wrote to his Royal niece (married to King George's III's brother). All the letters, both to and from Walpole, are sifted and their contents classified in categories of astonishing detail. Of course it is a typical index—no other kind is worth looking at. Each entry is labelled with its topic, and each is put on a separate line. Such typographical opulence, perhaps unique among indexes, helps to speed the skimming eye.

As Mr Lewis wrote in the initial volume of the edition, Walpole's main interests were politics, society, literature and art; and all are amply noted in the index. "Parliament (English)", for example, occupies only fifty columns of entries, with subsections elsewhere for "House of Commons" and "House of Lords". What is unexpected is the number of topics that do not obviously fit any of the main categories. Medical topics include Ague, Cancer, Colds, Consumption, Diarrhoea, Fart, Fever, Gout (six columns), Inoculation, Medicine (with two columns of cross-references), Opium, Rheumatism. Domestic topics include furniture (150 cross-references), drinks, plants, clothes, foods, etc. "Cod" may puzzle the reader who thinks it refers to fish when the entry reads: "Farinelli said to seek, in Newfoundland, 18, 119." Farinelli was a famous castrato singer, and a footnote on page 119 of Volume 18 spells out the joke. [The word is "Not in polite use," says the *OED* primly.] For the entry "Loo" the compilers take no chances with ambiguity; they label it "game".

What can be a headache for indexes is the treatment of peers and women. Should a peer's main entry be put under his title or family name? And should a woman's main entry

be under her maiden, married or pen-name?

In the Yale Walpole Mr Lewis solved the problem in the most logical, but also clumsy, way. All women of whatever rank or marital condition have their main entries under their maiden names—logical, because every woman possesses that unchangeable name; but unless unmarried, most women one might seek in this index are far better known by a married name or title. The reader interested in Madame Tissand is referred to Marie Giresult (in another volume of the index), other examples: Mrs Thrale or Piazzi Salazar; Madame de Sévigné; Brehan de Maureau; and then Rubutin-Chantal; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu; Pierpont; Madame du Deffand; Vichy-Champrond. Listing women under their maiden names has the further advantage of separating wives from husbands, who are often joined in the text, and it would avoid repetitive hunting if they were adjacent in the index.

Mr Lewis, who set up these principles and procedures at the beginning of his edition, once confided to me (about forty years later) that this decision to list women under their maiden names was the only one that he regretted. Since every other feature of the index is exemplary we can easily endure this minor inconvenience, particularly since cross-references to the main entries are carefully provided.

This great edition of Walpole's correspondence has been called encyclopaedic. Its index not only justifies that accolade but proves once again that as a scholarly enterprise of eighteenth-century life and culture the edition has few if any rivals.

## All right on the night

Geoffrey Holmes

STEPHEN B. BAXTER (Editor)  
*England's Rise To Greatness, 1660-1763*  
280pp. University of California Press. £25.50, 0 520 045726

Two things in juxtaposition—the reputation of the editor of this volume, a scholar well respected for his work on the Treasury and for the best biography in English of William III, and a title of unblushing ostentation—encourage the unwary reader to expect a homogeneous series of mainstream essays. The period is an inviting one, which deserves to be interpreted as a unity but in textbooks rarely is. The assumption behind the title is indisputable, suggesting a central theme of exceptional interest and importance, ripe for systematic development, given a strong team of historians, ten essays and 380 pages.

Yet disappointingly, though there is a lot to admire in it, the end product leaves such expectations largely unfulfilled. The reason is simple, once the provenance of the essays stands revealed. All originated as papers delivered at the Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, in 1977-78, at the invitation of Stephen Baxter, then Clark Library Professor. Few constraints, one imagines, could be imposed by a prospective editor who was probably pleased enough to get his field together and bring them to the starting gate. He does at least keep them nearly all on the right chronological course, between the Restoration and the Treaty of Paris, though A. Z. Slavov strays off for a while into the reign of James I, while John Brewer canters gaily into the years 1764-70 with a light-hearted offering on "The Number 45: A Wilkie Political Symbol", which must have made entertaining listening. However, the Library's prac-

tice of hanging the millstone of future publication round papers read in such circumstances is not usually the way to produce a close-knit volume of even quality; and so it proves here. Firmer editorial control might have spared the reader some unnecessary suffering. In view of the title eventually allotted to the collection, could not an excuse have been found for omitting altogether Slavov's "Crown v. Ramsey", with its mind-numbing technicalities and inscrutable relevance? And while Jacob Price's expert knowledge of the tobacco trade uncovers some intriguing links between the state of that trade and the genesis of Walpole's excise scheme of 1733, did he really need the indulgence of fifty pages to develop his thesis? Professor Baxter tries in a brief introduction to impart a measure of cohesion to the whole operation; but he is playing a losing hand.

A few essays, including the editor's own, do deal more or less directly with some fairly basic implications of "England's rise to greatness": with how she won her wars; for example, or with how her flowering national genius influenced her neighbours. The late A. M. Wilson, best known as an authority on Diderot, argues elegantly that England was the trail-blazer of the *Aufklärung*. Few would disagree that one of England's most important exports after 1700 was the wisdom of some of her great seventeenth-century intellectuals and scientists. The chief importer was eighteenth-century France. Wilson, however, goes further and lays claim on England's behalf to her own indigenous Enlightenment, under the later Stuarts. He (as it against the later French model, picking out a dozen common characteristics—a process edging at times uncomfortably close to the facile. There is certainly a case worth making here. It is just a pity that it is somewhat marred by an exaggerated view of the immediate benefits of 1689 and the instabilities that "Eng-

land's Enlightenment" was all neatly packaged and tied up with pink ribbon before 1700.

In a quite different vein Geoffrey Symcox, by presenting a case-study of Britain's relations with Savoy during the reign of Victor Amadeus II, is able to demonstrate to excellent effect how one of the classic instruments of British war policy and diplomacy after 1689 was forged and perfected. For 125 years the taxpayer at home was periodically tapped to allow bountiful subsidies to be paid to Continental allies (almost £2 million to Savoy alone from 1702 to 1713) to persuade them to fight Britain's enemies on land and release her own overstretched forces for operations elsewhere. An additional bonus from Symcox's well-researched, revealing paper is that it illuminates what is for British students an obscure theatre of the wars against Louis XIV—the struggle in Italy and its occasional extension into southern France.

Elsewhere in the collection are two essays which touch more obliquely on Britain's enhanced European and world status. Much of Reginald Hattam's "New Light on George I of Great Britain", recounting her major discoveries in German archives and elsewhere, is for the specialist. But eight pages should be required reading for students: a cameo of the full-canvassed re-interpretation of George's character and political role contained in her distinguished 1979 biography, including a convincing reassessment of the King's contribution to British foreign policy from 1714 to 1727; Earle Clayton Roberts, in discussing "Party and Patronage in Later Stuart England", makes a 'magisterial' contribution to the debate on the achievement of political stability within England by arguing that the tug-of-war over patronage between the Crown and the post-Restoration parliamentary parties was resolved, in favour of the parties, at least as early as 1702—much earlier (so he claims) than recent political historians have recognized. Some will feel his case hangs too much on a very selective choice of examples and betrays an unsavory view of the working of politics after 1689; but it does, at least, have a bearing on the domestic base from which Britain (not merely England) made her surging advance in the early eighteenth century.

Although the same cannot be said of Daniel Bayly's discussion of England's attitude towards the poor in this period, here is one essay in this book which must, on no account be missed. The author is careful to say that it is "an essay in the history of ideas", and it is true that he under her maiden, married or pen-name?

it touches only incidentally on actual measures of public and private policy. Yet it is a notably original and imaginative paper, written with force and clarity. For a scholar who made his name through his work on the Royal Navy and its administration under the first two Georges, it also represents an impressive demonstration of versatility. A novelty on an altogether smaller scale is Lois Schwoerer's "The Glorious Revolution as a Spectacle": it is not her fault that, owing to the length of time taken to get these papers into print, her essay has already appeared, much of it verbatim, as Chapter 15 of her book *The Declaration of Rights* (1981).

What is puzzling, however, is that Professor Schwoerer should confuse part of a valid argument by reproducing as a plate (also chosen to embellish the dust cover) a print which she admits is not contemporary but which, she claims, shows the Declaration being "read by the Deputy Clerk of Parliament" during the famous Whitehall ceremony of February 12, 1689, at which the throne was offered to William and Mary. What the print seems to me to depict—and quite fictitiously—has much to do with the person, probably the marquis of Halifax, Speaker of the Convention House of Lords, offering the parchment like a holy chalice to the future sovereigns, and William stretching out a hand apparently to receive it; something he assuredly and very deliberately did not do. It is later Whig myth, in other words, not a faithful reproduction of contemporary fact. Many of the framers of the Declaration of Rights may have believed in contractual kingship; the Prince of Orange did not.

It may seem ungracious to end this review with another brickbat. Unfortunately the editor invites it by his own contribution (introduced in a footnote to this *indefinite*). "The Conduct of the Seven Years War" suggests something of a debunking exercise, intended to leave the firm impression that Pitt was a complete charlatan of very restricted influence ("a notorious liar"), that the duke of Newcastle was a financial wizard (readers of R. A. Koch, please note) and that George II was the true genius behind the aim and the strategy of expelling the French from North America. Recent scholarship has certainly encouraged some reassessment of traditional views of all three figures, but Baxter's paper sails in print too close to the wind of caricature. Like the book itself, it would have been more acceptable with a judicious and accurate title.

## The year of the foreigner's dog

Dick Wilson

LIANG HENG and JUDITH SHAPIRO  
*Son of the Revolution*  
301pp. Chatto and Windus/Hugarth Press. £9.95.  
0 711 2751 1

A Chinese student once talked, argued, blustered and bluffed his way from the famine-struck heartland of central China, across thousands of miles to the Hongkong border and into the foreign community of Hongkong, wangling all kinds of documents and permissions culminating in a visa (to which he was not strictly entitled) from the German Consul. He called himself Rolf, and I believe he is still happily settled in Germany. For a time, I don't recall how or why, he occupied my spare room; everyone gave in to the intense moral superiority which he displayed to us Europeans. Our local (Cantonese or Shanghai) friends explained Ralf's behaviour in one word—"Huanese", the same provincial origin as Mao Zedong.

Almost twenty five years later I am strongly reminded of Rolf when reading this autobiography of another young Huanese who looked the Chinese system and escaped to a different world. For once the tale is told with personal directness (such as no foreign visitor can emulate) but without the preaching and self-justification that mar the testimony of many Chinese authors. I suspect we may owe a debt on the letter score to Liang Heng's American wife and co-author, Judy Shapiro. Her contribution is masked, but the book began with their earliest meetings at the Hunan Teachers' College, where he recounted his life story and she took notes. Whoever deserves the praise, *Son of the Revolution* is beautifully written, tightly organized yet relaxed in style, not seeking to make any points until the last few pages, which are a letdown.

"I thought it astonishing", Liang says of seeing his future wife, and English language is "that a girl of only 25 should be so well educated." Coinciding from the oldest civilization on earth after thirty years' submission to a supposedly modern, rationalistic and scientific political philosophy, that is one of the subtlest ironies in the book. The appalling social backwardness of China, reinforced by the gratuitous philistinism of Chinese communism as practised at the grass-roots, looms from the pages of these memoirs as stifling, cold and—worst of all—as inimical to most of the constructive changes which a billion Chinese need if they are to become modern, prosperous and happy.

Here is a man born into Communist China (in 1954) willing of his experiences of two de-

cadres, yet only a handful of pages relate to the teething problems of material modernization—and all are disconsolate. In the Goose Court Commune the peasants describe their life in the couplet:

During the first half of the year we grow rice for the government,  
During the second half we wait for emergency relief.

The nicest woman in the neighbourhood is permanently incontinent because official doctors, following population control policy literally, refused to take out her painfully misplaced intra-uterine device and she resorted to an untrained practitioner who put it out with a bent wire that damaged her bladder and uterus. The farmers made their little money from pigs, plugging their noses before market to keep their weight up, and could not understand the new Communist policy of discouraging, even forbidding, such sidelines. "Why is raising chickens and ducks rotten capitalism?"

Later Liang had a turn in industry, at the Changsha Shale Oil Factory, where things were no better. The workers spent most of their days gossiping, gambling, and doing private repairs for family and friends—all well organized with look-outs. Their "open indifference to the workshop" was possible because of the long delays in getting parts or materials through the bureaucratic jungle of controls.

No, the important thing in China is not material progress but politics—the politics not of idealism but of small-town bullying, hypocrisy, insensitivity, and needless alienation. Liang's parents were conscientious cadres who worked hard, against the grain, for the Communist Party in its early years. Indeed they were so busy, he as a journalist, she as a public security official, that their son was sent at three to the child-care centre "for early training in socialist thought through collective living, far from the potentially corrupting influence of family life."

But the family began to disintegrate in 1957, when Liang's mother was pressed in the Hundred Flowers Movement to make criticisms of a superior—only to be denounced as a "Rightist", and sent for "labour reform". Liang's father, knowing nothing could be done and wanting to save the rest of the family, hid her in the face for saying the Party had been wrong over this, and Liang, barely three years old, "cut her out of my life". In his eyes she was the person whose bad behaviour now prevented him from joining the Young Pioneers like all the other children ("your mother is a Rightist"). Typically, he found a "back-door" route to his dream, promising to give the Young Pioneers a football if they admitted him.

At twelve he saw the Cultural Revolution arrive in Changsha. His primary school friends drew up a charge-sheet of revenge on their most hated teachers: the music teacher in-

dicted for wearing high heels, the maths teacher for wearing perfume in summer, the hygiene teacher for having forced them to sit with their arms tight behind them, and another teacher for boasting about his advanced Soviet teaching methods. Liang's long-suffering father stamped on their scheme since the purpose of the new campaign was to "ferret out our enemies, not to attack our friends", and he went round apologizing for the youngsters. But the game turned into a nightmare when this same father was in turn denounced as a "thoroughly capitalist newsman". Had he not said in an essay that the sunflower relied on its own lust for life, meaning that "China can be strong without the Communist Party"? Had he not dared to insist that news should be "true", even if it meant attacking the Communist Party's faults? "He wants intellectuals to lead the country! Moreover... in all those years he used only one quotation from Chairman Mao, but hundreds from Tolstoy, Balzac, Shakespeare, Mark Twain... Liang Shan! Are you Chinese or a foreigner's dog?"

That was the end of his father's career, and it saddled the boy Liang with a burden he could never quite throw off. "This is no place for you", primary-school Cultural Revolutionaries now shrieked at him, "stinking intellectual's son". He had to compose a statement: "Expose and criticise my father Liang Shan". It was, he noted, "my first lesson in self-protection in modern society."

Luck came to his aid in subsequent tests. He was accused of scratching a slogan "Down with Chairman Mao" on a wall, because "a boy playing with a slingshot was seen writing that slogan, and you are the only child in this unit who has one". The charge was dropped. He even, surprisingly, won his way into the ranks of the Red Guards. He "grew ten inches" on getting his Mao lapel button.

In Beijing he won a small place in the momentous history of those Cultural Revolution days by standing guard to the pianist Lu Shikun, whose fingers were broken by the Red Guards for playing revisionist music and shaking hands with Khrushchev (the young Liang, compassionate at heart, gave him water to drink). On their way home he and his friends witnessed a rape on the train; the culprits "couldn't be real Red Guards!"

After it was all over Liang went to the home of his step-father's sister, an American-trained scientist who had committed suicide. "We came back when Chino entered the Korean war", her husband told him. "We didn't feel right staying in a country that was fighting against our motherland and we had learned enough in our studies to be able to make a contribution." But she had relatives in Taiwan and when she could not give the Red Guards

the names of "other scientists who were CIA agents", they immersed her in "stinking slime" up to her neck, after which she hanged herself.

In the end Liang bribed a senior official at his factory with watermelons and cigarettes to let him go to college, and there he met Judy Shapiro, under her guise of Xia Zhu-li (meaning Summer Bamboo Beauty). At their first kiss, "my long education in self-protection dissolved in the flow of emotions" and he felt that he was "being accepted for who I really was", without labels. In the privacy of her flat (the cracks in the door of which they filled with toothpaste) they fell in love, although he had some doubts. "In the West, people said, a kiss was taken as lightly as a handshake." Party officials warned his mother that "Weste men marry and divorce just for the fun of it. We're just trying to protect your son." But the couple appealed just at the right time politically, and the combination of his Huanese and her American-Jewish pushiness must have been formidable. Deng Xiaoping's reasons for approving the match came out at the wedding, where the provincial Party official declared: "Since the smashing of the Gang of Four, the United States of America has become one of China's closest friends. The marriage of Xia Zhu-li and Liang Heng symbolises this friendship." And so the story has a personal happy ending, with Liang working for a doctorate in Chinese at Columbia University, while his wife works for the State Department.

But it is a far from happy story from the point of view of the one billion other Chinese. The depth of disillusion, despair and mistrust which Mao's ill-educated revolutionaries have inflicted is obviously crippling. "It's too dangerous to live by the pen", his father observes, while his mother loses that "energetic determination" which had characterized her earlier work for Chinese progress. In order to achieve anything in China it seems that you have to break the rules. When Liang wanted to go to another city to visit a friend he got a letter of introduction from his factory to "learn from" another factory in X, and he altered it to X. He dodged paying his hotel bill by slipping down the drainpipe, and his restaurant bill by changing places after he had eaten, so that there were no empty plates to form his basis.

Liang Heng is liberated in the full sense of the word, and being Huanese he is probably tough enough to accommodate the loneliness and impersonality of Western society. But those he leaves behind in China have somehow to overcome the continuing legacies of Communist maladministration. It is they who must decide whether these are inescapable side-effects of an intrinsically improving social medicine, or whether they render alternative remedies to the disease more attractive.

## The Polish August

Timothy Garton Ash

ANWAR BRUMBERG (Editor)  
*Poland: Genesis of a Revolution*  
301pp. New York: Random House. \$19.95 (paperback, \$5.95).  
0 312 3237 7

Anyone wishing to understand the causes of the Polish revolution of 1980-82 should begin by seeing a few films—Wajda's *Man of Marble* and *Man of Iron*, Zausz's *Contract*, Jerzy Szust's *Top Dog*. These illuminate the origins of Solidarity more vividly than anything so far written on the subject. Then they should read the book, which is the most intelligent and authoritative survey published to date.

The first part of *Poland: Genesis of a Revolution* consists of nine analytical essays on the main regions and issues. The authors are among the leading experts in the field. Włodzimierz Gajda contributes the best available brief summary of the economic causes of the Polish crisis. Unlike many Western observers, he does not point to the political rationale of the workers' economic follies, and to agriculture, the failure of successive Polish leaders, Aleksander Smolár, and the lack of a short chapter on "The Rich and the Poor", giving details of the expropriation of privileges and corruption of the ruling class under Giersek. He argues con-

vincingly that this was a self-destructive extension of a general principle governing the distribution of social goods in Communist systems: a principle which he calls, after Max Weber, "sultanism".

Alex Pravda, in a revised and abbreviated version of his important article in *Soviet Studies* (April 1982), shows how this growing inequality offended against the egalitarianism which Poland's young working-class has imbibed from a socialist education. Using survey material and the research of Polish sociologists he presents a group portrait of the aspirations and grievances of Polish workers in the 1970s. Linking these data to the demands which the strikers themselves made in the near-general strike of August 1980. He rightly emphasizes that before the outbreak of revolution in 1980 there had been a silent revolution of rising material expectations. In this respect Poland bears out Tocqueville's famous observation that revolutions tend to happen not when things have been getting worse but when things have been getting better.

Inevitably, there is considerable overlap between contributions—and some repetition. In a sense, though, one could have done with even more overlap, for, as Leszek Kolakowski stresses in his essay on the intelligentsia, it was the unprejudiced convergence of three social forces—the Church, the workers and the intellectuals—which made Solidarity possible. The

reader has to reconstruct that convergence from separate analyses of its component parts. At least one factor seems to fall into the space between contributions. This is the role of the Church, and in particular of the younger clergy, in forming the consciousness of the young generation which was to become civilly active for the first time in Solidarity. Throughout the 1970s many young priests, following the example of Cardinals Wyszyński and Wojtyła (as Christopher Cvić explains in his informative essay on the Church), were delivering lectures of human and civil rights from the pulpit. Zbigniew Bujak, the Warsaw Solidarity leader (twenty-six years old in 1980), began his political education listening to the sermons of his local priest. It was through the padre that he first saw copies of the paper *Robotnik* (The Worker), and went on to meet its editors from the intellectual opposition.

Where else in eastern Europe could this have happened? Nowhere else, George Schöpflin suggests in his incisive comparative survey. While the Ceausescu régime and the material lot of the Romanian workers were both to some extent comparable with conditions in Poland in the late 1970s, neither the Church nor the intellectuals could be expected to educate, help or restrain the working-class. "The only choice open to Romanian society appeared to be 'anarchy', which, given that country's traditions, would have been violent."

(As opposed to Polish traditions of *peaceful* anarchy?) While there were few signs of solidarity with Solidarity from workers in the rest of eastern Europe (and signs of active hostility in East Germany), Schöpflin concludes that "the attraction of Solidarity... may well outlive the measures taken against it".

The second part of the book is an anthology of feature articles, interviews and polemics from the official and (mostly) unofficial Polish press, treating themes like censorship, economic abuses, alcoholism, Church and state. While this uncommonly well-translated selection gives a good taste of the quality of intellectual debate in Poland in the past decade, one could have wished it to be more closely linked to the analysis of the first part. Might it not have been useful to have at least one extract from *Robotnik*, which, of all the unofficial papers, was the one most directly involved in the genesis of the revolution?

Since this book will, I hope, be used by students as well as general readers, I have one quibble on their behalf. The notes are uneven and unhelpful: on some essays they are professional source notes to obscure Polish publications, on others they turn out to be almost entirely cross-references to other chapters in this book. Inadequate though the English language sources are, a student could still be pointed in the direction of further reading on most of the subjects here surveyed.

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# Opening the door

David Hunt

FRIEDRICH-KARL VON PLEHWE  
Reichskanzler Kurt von Schleicher:  
Weimars letzte Chance gegen Hitler  
351pp. Munich: Bechtle.

Kurt von Schleicher, who was Hitler's immediate predecessor as German Chancellor, has found few defenders either in his lifetime or subsequently. For British readers his reputation is probably most seriously compromised by Sir John Wheeler-Bennett's *The Nemesis of Power*, where he is characterized as the type-specimen of an intriguer. Wheeler-Bennett carries his prejudice so far as to make play with the wildly irrelevant fact that a literal translation of Schleicher's name in English would be "creeper". The influence of Wheeler-Bennett's book, in which wartime passions still glow, has been great. On the other hand Gordon Craig, writing with greater objectivity, has recently described Schleicher as Hitler's most skilled and most dangerous opponent; and François-Poncet, the brilliant French Ambassador in Berlin from 1931 to 1938, called him a man of honour who he thought could prevent the Nazi seizure of power.

Schleicher came from a Prussian family of army officers and was commissioned in the 3rd Foot Guards Regiment in 1900. In August 1914 he was appointed to the General Staff and served in staff appointments throughout the war. In 1918 he was serving under Groener, who had become Chief of Staff when Ludendorff's nerve cracked. It was Groener, the

Württemberg, who found the courage to tell the Kaiser that he must abdicate. The Prussian Schleicher was of the same opinion, that it was now time to save what could be saved. Thereafter the two men worked closely together and their friendship grew. They both loyally supported the new Republic under Ebert, which, as all historians agree, could hardly have survived without Groener. Through all the unrest caused by revolutionaries and separatists the support of the Reichswehr preserved the institutions of the Republic and the unity of Germany. When Groener was called from retirement in 1926 to succeed the admirable civilian Defence Minister, Gessler, Schleicher became head of the special Wehrmacht-Abteilung in the Ministry, almost equivalent to the position of a Parliamentary Under-Secretary. In 1932 he succeeded Groener as Minister after the latter's painful failure in the Reichstag. In May of the same year he was largely responsible for suggesting to Hindenburg the surprising appointment of von Papen as Chancellor. He remained the strongest character in the government and when Papen resigned on December 2 was appointed Chancellor himself. He retained that position only until January 30, 1933, when Hindenburg appointed Hitler as Chancellor and Papen as Vice-Chancellor. Schleicher retired into private life. On June 30, 1934 he and his wife were murdered by Nazi assassins.

Such a steady rise is bound to provoke envious aspersions against even the most straightforward. Schleicher, by the nature of his duties, had had to learn how to handle the

fractious politicians of the Weimar Republic. Friedrich-Karl von Plehwe has produced evidence against the commonest accusations of intrigue; for instance he disproves, by close attention to the evidence of dates, Alan Bullock's story of how Schleicher and Hammerstein forced Groener to resign. Schleicher's positive policy was to tame the Nazis by making them take a limited responsibility for government, and if possible to split them by encouraging the dissidence of Gregor Strasser. He also tried, as Chancellor, to obtain the support of the Trades Unions and the Social Democrats. The former were willing but the rigidly dogmatic Rudolf Breitscheid insisted on preserving the ideological purity of the SPD. Undoubtedly Schleicher's greatest mistake, as he himself recognized, was to push the fortunes of Papen. In this book Papen

## Double shifts

Roger Morgan

ROBERT PICH (Editor)  
Das Bündnis im Bündnis: Deutsch-französische Beziehungen im internationalen Spannungsfeld  
260pp. Berlin: Severin und Siedler.  
3 88680 048 2

KLAUS HILDEBRAND and KARL FERDINAND WERNER (Editors)  
Deutschland und Frankreich 1936-1939  
719pp. Munich and Zurich: Artemis.  
3 7608 4660 2

For generations the history of Western Europe has been dominated by conflict between France and Germany. The attempts made in the past third of a century to create a more united Europe have been largely built around the reconciliation between these hereditary enemies (a partial reconciliation, to be sure, but like the attempt at European unity itself, impressive in view of what preceded it).

It was Konrad Adenauer's welcome for Robert Schuman's proposal for a Coal and Steel Community in 1950 which got the movement for European unity off the ground; Adenauer's signing with de Gaulle of the Franco-German Treaty of 1963 gave a further impetus to unity at a critical moment (though Adenauer's half-commitment to a Gaullist idea of Europe was disavowed by his colleagues and successors); and then Giscard d'Estaing and Helmut Schmidt, in a joint response to the economic turbulence of the 1970s, brought most of Western Europe together in the European Monetary System.

The twentieth anniversary of the 1963 Franco-German treaty is marked by the publication of an important collection of essays edited by Robert Picht, the Director of the German-French Institute at Ludwigsburg. His team of eminent contributors (half French, half German) assess the strengths and limitations of their two countries' *rapprochement* from a wide range of angles. Starting in the heady realms of political philosophy—particularly the fundamental question of national identity—Wolfgang Mommsen and René Rémouard analyse the problems of bringing together a German nation (indeed only part of a nation, uncertain of its place in history and housed in the explicitly provisional Republic of 1949) with a French nation possessed of a very firm concept of statehood stretching back beyond Napoleon and 1789 to the *ancien régime*; many of the obstacles to Franco-German understanding, it is clear, go back to differing concepts of "nation" and "state", as well as to the specific history of conflict between them.

In a series of contributions on individual issues of the recent past and present, Michel Taugel of *Le Monde* acutely sketches differing French and German views on détente and East-West relations; Luther Kuehl of the German Defence Ministry contrasts the strategic perspectives of the "independent" nuclear power, France, and NATO's strongest conventional power, Germany; and other specialists analyse Franco-German interactions in the fields of economics, European integration and relations with the developing countries. As the chapter by Dieter Marjessch and Henrik Utewede brings out, the close consultation on economic policy between Paris and Bonn in the

last ten years has been due not only to the good personal relationship between Giscard and Schmidt ("ces deux-là: ils se tutoient, ça anglaist"), as Michel Jobert scrupulously observed, and the elaborate consultative machinery laid down by the Treaty of 1963, but also to the objective need for two national economies, heavily dependent on each other in trade and investment, to be managed along lines compatible with each other as possible, despite their marked differences in economic philosophy and their in-built tendencies towards divergence. The progress of intellectual and artistic communication between the two countries, and the general flow of information, well analysed here by Robert Picht and René Lasserre, have done something (though how much?) to create a common frame of reference for resolving particular issues. Despite the double shifts from Giscard to Mitterrand and from Schmidt to Kohl, the degree of cooperation between France and Germany seems unaffected: perhaps the hereditary enemies are indeed "turning themselves into hereditary friends", as one of the pioneers of the process put it.

It is instructive to look back at a contrasting period of Franco-German relations less than fifty years ago, the years of the Spanish Civil War, the Popular Front and Munich. Between them the twenty-six contributors to the volume edited by Klaus Hildebrand and Karl Ferdinand Werner (the proceedings of a conference at the German Historical Institute in Paris in 1978) cover the subject from almost every angle. A large part of the volume describes the preparations made by the two countries for a second great war against each other (the chapters on the new dimension of air power, by the French contributors Charles Christol and Patrice Buffetot and Madeline Asor Rosa, are especially illuminating), and there are also good discussions of economic factors, as well as a number of chapters that bring out the incompatibility of French and German diplomatic objectives in Spain, in Austria and indeed throughout Europe. The volume should not be neglected by students of the period who have no German: half the contributions and much of the report on the discussions are in French.

For the moment, as Alfred Grosser shows in his characteristically penetrating contribution to the Picht volume, "the French" and "the Germans" continue to draw sharply contrasting lessons from the Second World War. For "the French", the surrender of Munich and the collapse in 1940 were the result of military unpreparedness, and the moral is that France needs her own independent defence; that France needs her own independent defence should become closely integrated into Western military alliance, cautiously seeking conciliation with the Soviet bloc, remain firm non-nuclear and perhaps refuse to station more American missiles on German soil. Although the record of Franco-German reconciliation must strike anyone who compares the 1940s to the 1980s as a phenomenal success story, Alfred Grosser reminds us that we are still looking at two nations with two very different identities.

## How the fiction told

H. R. Southworth

MARYSE BERTRAND DEMUNOZ  
La Guerra civil española en la novela:  
Bibliografía comentada  
Two volumes, 762pp. Madrid: Turnnzas.

Maryse Bertrand, who teaches at the University of Montreal, has incorporated into this annotated bibliography the fruits of some twenty years of research. The bibliography begins with a thirty-five-page exposition of the theoretical bases of the historical novel in general, with conclusions concerning the Spanish War in particular. One of the problems for any bibliographer dealing with a historical period lies in the choice of the starting and ending dates. Ms Bertrand has decided to begin with a few works in which the Civil War is seen as a foreboding on the part of the characters of the coming disaster, and she ends with the death of Francisco Franco in 1975. Another problem is how to classify the selected books. Ms Bertrand's material is arranged alphabetically by author, under four headings: "Guerra Presentida", "Guerra Vivida", "Guerra Recontada", and "Guerra Referida". The extent of the author's research can be measured by the fact that she has included authors of twenty-six nationalities, of which two are for Spain ("Españoles" and "Españoles Exiliados") and two for Canada ("Canadienses figueses" and "Canadienses Franceses"). Each annotation has three parts: nationality, place of birth, date of birth and, perhaps, of death, if these are known; brief résumé of narrative; short critique of the novel.

These annotations are uneven in quality, doubtless because they were composed over a long period, when the author's own knowledge and ideas were changing. The literary and political criticisms of the books published from 1960 to 1975 are superior to most of those written earlier. The competent introduction is also evidently of recent vintage, as when Ms Bertrand writes: "Si por un lado la lucha fratricida fue ideológica, fue también y sobre todo una lucha de clases, una lucha social".

The annotations are followed by a series of helpful indexes, graphs and appendices. There has been year of publication—it runs from 1932 to 1975, and there are only ten undated

books; a plan giving the number of books published by each nationality in each year; an index by city or region where the greater part of the novel's action took place; an index showing the political ideology of the leading personalities; an index "por clase y por la técnica empleada". Then two appendices: one on prize-winning novels; the other naming the authors of prologues for the novels. And there are eleven pages listing "libros de crítica", and eighteen pages of "artículos de crítica", both in small print. And to finish off, there is an index of authors and another of titles.

The first of the four divisions for the annotated books, "Guerra Presentida", is superfluous and rather blurred in its conception. Of the 148 novels included, only nine—two by Ralph Bates, one by Ramón Sender—were really written before the Civil War. Some ninety of the titles listed in this section are not even annotated there, but are in the second category, "Guerra Vivida". I have counted only fifty-four novels annotated under the heading "Guerra Presentida", and most of them are really novels of the war and reflect the author's experience in, or reading about, the war itself. Quite a few end with the outbreak of the fighting. Any novel written before the outbreak of the war seems to me to be out of place in this bibliography, but, I would add, since the category does exist, it should contain Jenny Ballou's *Spanish Prelude*.

Where the annotations themselves are concerned, I should have liked to see more attention given to the publishing history of the novels, to their translations and subsequent editions. The diffusion of a book is a prime indicator of its influence. For example, in commenting on Arturo Barea's trilogy, *The Forging of a Rebel*, Ms Bertrand mentions only the first, London, translations into English—the book's first printing (1941-46)—and the Spanish-language (Argentine) original. But Barea's trilogy was translated into Dutch, Danish, Swedish and French—and probably other languages—before it appeared in Argentina in 1951. The trilogy was published in one volume in New York in 1946, but there the original English translation of the first volume, *The Clash*—by Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell—was eliminated in favour of a new translation by Barea's wife, Ilse, who had done the original

translations of the second and third volumes.

Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is also given a far too meagre editorial history, only the first American printing being noted. The publishing record of the novel is of bibliographical interest. It appeared too late in 1940 to be published on the European continent before the end of the Second World War, save for, to the best of my knowledge, a Stockholm edition in 1941; it was published, however, in London in March 1941. It was also in London that the first French translation was printed, in 1941, "Edition spéciale pour la France métropolitaine". A Spanish translation came out in Buenos Aires in 1942; this was apparently a pirated edition, for in 1944 another translation appeared. "Unica edición legítima en Castellano", and went into eleven editions by 1956. The same translation was published in Mexico, but, for some reason, only in 1952, and in nine years had gone into seven editions. The novel was issued in Italy in 1945 and in twenty years had arrived at twenty-one editions. Finally, Hemingway's novel was published in Spain, in 1968, before the death of Franco, in still another translation. But the motion picture of the same name, which had done so much to promote the book, especially in paperback, had to wait for El Caudillo's death to reach the Spanish public.

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1936 marked the beginning of a decline in worldwide interest in the Castilian novel written by Spaniards. This is ironic, for the ideological foundation of the Franco regime was imperialism *tous azimuts*, including cultural expansion, and, if the forty years of Franco saw a rise in the international attention paid to the novel in Castilian, it was attention given to novels written in Spanish America, not in Spain. Paradoxically, exiled Spaniards writing about the Civil War in French (Jorge Semprin, Michel del Castillo, Agustín Gómez-Arcos, José-Luis de Villalonga, etc) have more easily established international reputations than have their fellow-Spaniards writing about the same subject in Castilian, whether they published in Spain or Argentina or Mexico.

The index of authors by nationality is instructive. The twenty-six nationalities can be reduced to twelve languages: Spanish, French, English, German, Italian, Russian, Yugoslav, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Portuguese and Catalan. As was to be expected, most of the novels were written in Castilian, under the rubric "Españoles", than "Españoles Exiliados", followed by three books for Mexico, and one each for Argentina, Peru and Colombia. The two Spanish lists are not too rigidly political. Second place goes to French (France and French Canada), which has, according to Ms Bertrand's figures, eight more titles than English (Great Britain, United States, Canada and Australia). The German contingent, with eighteen titles, has twice as many as the Italian. But the "nationality" classification is slightly falsified. Does Gustav Regler's *The Great Crusade* really belong among the Germans, since it has been published only in English (USA)? Was the novel by Y. Guerman, presented as *Esta es la causa* and published in Spanish in Moscow, never printed in Russian? Was Ehrenburg's book *Qué más queréis?*, which appeared in Barcelona in 1938, ever issued in Moscow? Was Vintila Hoda's novel, printed in 1968 in both France and Spain, ever published in Rumania? And was the novel by the Cuban Nivalria Tejerá, which was translated from Spanish into French in 1958 in Paris, never published in its original tongue? Still another statistic: 1938 and 1939 were the two years of highest productivity: forty-six novels each year. The output went down to five novels in 1947 and six in 1948 (probably because of the World War) and then began to rise, with a low of nine and a high of thirty-three during the 1950s, a low of eleven and a high of thirty-one during the 70s, and in the cutoff year of 1975 a total of twelve.

The bibliography of the Spanish Civil War, with its thousands of entries, has not been well served up to now. Although Maryse Bertrand's work deals with a limited aspect, it constitutes the most competent bibliographic publication concerning the conflict yet published, and is an indispensable tool for any university library with students in Spanish literature and history.

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## Under pressure

Michael Butler

J. M. RITCHIE  
German Literature under National Socialism  
325pp. Oporto, Oporto, Helmi, £17.95.  
0-7099 2217 5

The last two decades have seen a steady growth in the attention paid to the impact of National Socialism on German literature and in particular to the phenomenon of "Exilliteratur", the work of the many poets, novelists and dramatists who were driven into exile by Hitler's régime. J. M. Ritchie's well-researched survey pays generous tribute to earlier scholars in the field. Indeed, one of the principal merits of *German Literature under National Socialism* is the location and assessment of much important but obscure material.

The book is divided into four sections: a preliminary analysis of the nationalist-conservative tradition which opposed the modernist experimentation and "decadent" excitement of the Weimar Republic; a critical examination of the literature produced within Nazi Germany, both for and against the régime; an account of the anti-fascist work of the exiles, including those involved in the Spanish Civil War; and finally, a brief discussion of the situation after 1945 when exiles returning from East and West, "inner émigrés" and nationalists alike, were confronted with the full dimension and consequences of Nazism and the problems associated with their own altered roles and personal responsibility during the twelve years of tyranny.

By taking a fresh look at relatively neglected writers active in the Weimar Republic such as Erwin Kohlenfeyer and Hans Grimm—who, as novel *Wolk ohne Baum* (1926) had sold half a million copies by 1938—Ritchie is able to highlight and gauge the strength and persistence of conservative hostility to the dominant intellectual trends of the time. Nazi ideology did not spring from nowhere; it had a basis among writers who were not necessarily of the first rank, nor even Nazi sympathisers, but who were in tune with popular sentiment.

Ritchie makes no grand aesthetic claims for the literature written specifically to meet Goebbels's demand for "stately bombastism", but demonstrates how the Nazis silently appropriated their opponents' experiments, including writing-class cultural forms and even the techniques of the despised Expressionists, in an effort to create a monumental literature fit for the Third Reich. He takes

seriously such items as Horst Wessel's notorious marching song in order to indicate how distorted idealism could fire naïve and dangerous enthusiasms. The transfiguration of this sad pimp's life into a paradigm of fascist virtue is described in detail to illustrate the mechanics of the Nazi propaganda machine.

In this context, however, it is interesting to note how much directly oppositional literature (including magazines) actually got past the Nazi censorship apparatus in addition to the more subtle attacks, veiled in historicizing fictions, by such established writers as Werner Bergengruen and Ernst Jünger. In fact, the latter's *Auf den Marmorklippen* (1939), often seen by his apologists as a classic denunciation of dictatorship, enjoyed surprising success throughout the war, 20,000 copies alone being published by the German Army in Paris in 1942. Ritchie concludes that the Nazis did not appear to consider this brand of "inner emigration" a serious threat. The fact that they suppressed with swift brutality the uncensored protest of such very different men as the Nobel Prize winner, Carl von Ossietzky, and the right-wing nationalist Ernst Weichert the moment he stepped over the line, raises fundamental questions about the role of literature in a society under extreme pressure.

The various phases of the intellectual diaspora are dealt with succinctly. The political and geographical directions in which these writers and artists fled were to have important consequences for the development of German literature after the war. On the other hand, the tragic plight of those writers who, unlike Thomas Mann and Brecht, had little or no reputation outside Germany and, cut off from their language and source of income, succumbed to poverty and despair, is viewed with sympathy.

The book's concluding section underlines the complex cultural continuity stretching back to the First World War and beyond, which gives the lie to the emotive concept of 1945 as the "Year Zero", the so-called radical break from the past. Professor Ritchie points to the numerous writers who published freely in Nazi Germany and who pursued their careers after the war—in some cases with no discernible change of direction. The fascist legacy is thus shown to be a source of much tension and ambivalence between public and writers, both old and new, in the post-war years of reconstruction, exacerbated by the division of Germany and the resultant pressure of competing ideologies.